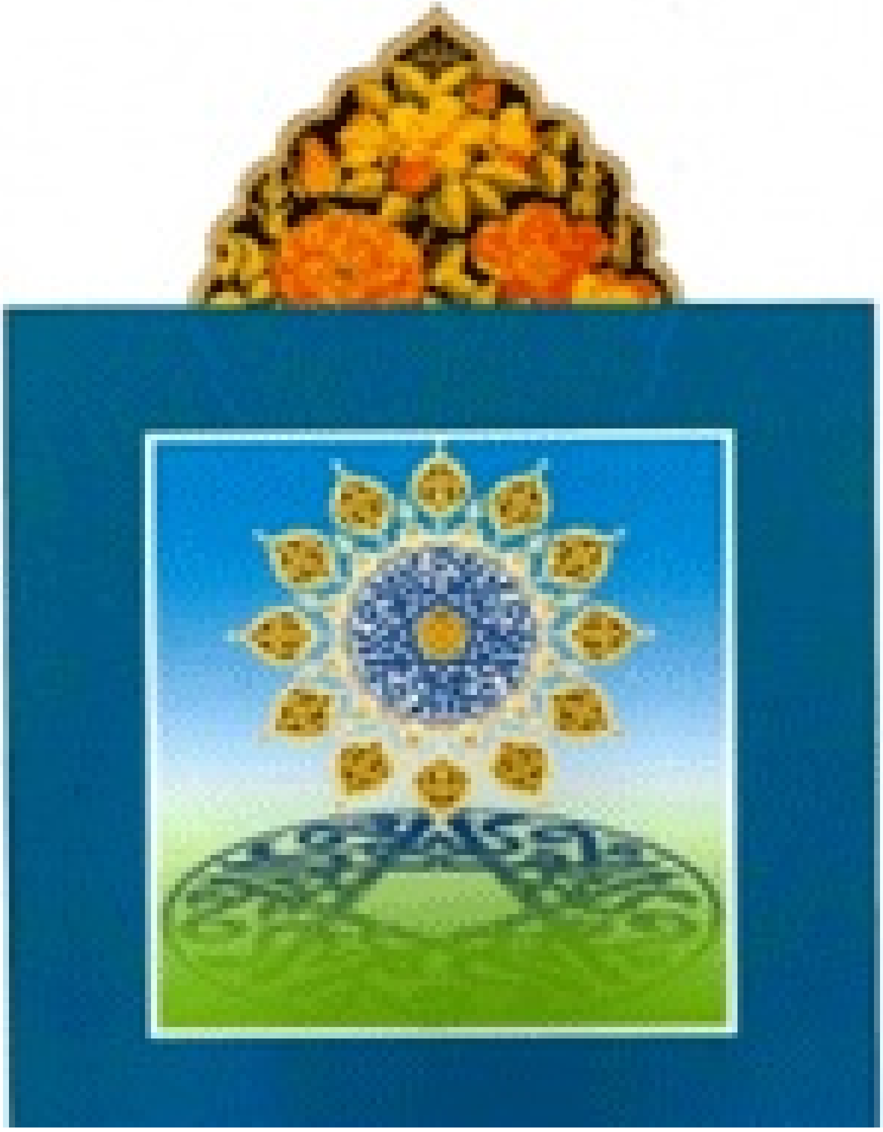
Provisions for the Journey

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Volume ١

point

The hadith discussed in the text is one of the most comprehensive and rewarding exhortations of the Noble Prophet (S) to one of his most eminent companions by the .name of Abu Dharr

Foreword

In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

The invaluable legacy of the Household [Ahl al-Bayt] of the Prophet (may peace be upon them all), as preserved by their followers, is a comprehensive school of thought that embraces all branches of Islamic knowledge. This school has produced many brilliant scholars who have drawn inspiration from this rich and pure resource. It has given many scholars to the Muslim ummah who, following in the footsteps of Imams of the Prophet's Household ('a), have done their best to clear up the doubts raised by various creeds and currents within and without Muslim society and to answer their questions. Throughout the past centuries, they have given well-reasoned answers .and clarifications concerning these questions and doubts

To meet the responsibilities assigned to it, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) has embarked on a defence of the sanctity of the Islamic message and its verities, often obscured

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by the partisans of various sects and creeds as well as by currents hostile to Islam. The Assembly follows in the footsteps of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and the disciples of their school of thought in its readiness to confront these challenges and tries to be on the .frontline in consonance with the demands of every age

The arguments contained in the works of the scholars belonging to the School of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) are of unique significance. That is because they are based on genuine scholarship and appeal to reason, and avoid prejudice and bias. These arguments address scholars and thinkers in a manner that appeals to healthy minds and .wholesome human nature

To assist the seekers of truth, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly has endeavored to present a new phase of these arguments contained in the studies and translations of the works of contemporary Shi'ah writers and those who have embraced this sublime .school of thought through divine blessing

The Assembly is also engaged in edition and publication of the valuable works of leading Shi'ah scholars of earlier ages to assist the seekers of the truth in discovering the truths which the School of the Prophet's Household ('a) has offered to the entire .world

The Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly looks forward to benefit from the opinions of the .readers and their suggestions and constructive criticism in this area

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating the genuine Islamic teachings as preached by the

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.(Prophet Muhammad (S

We beseech God, the Most High, to accept our humble efforts and to enable us to enhance them under the auspices of Imam al-Mahdi, His vicegerent on the earth .((may Allah expedite his advent

We express our gratitude to Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi, the author of the present book, and Mr. Kelvin Lembani (Muhammad 'Abd al-'Aziz), its translator. We also thank our colleagues who have participated in producing this work, especially .the staff of the Translation Office

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The Ahl al-Bayt ('a) World Assembly

Lesson ١: The Quality of Servitude and the Path to Eternal Bliss

point

The hadith which we have put forward as the pivot of our discussion is one of the most comprehensive and rewarding exhortations of the Noble Prophet (S)(١) to one of his most eminent companions by the name of Abu Dharr. The text of this hadith has been recorded in the distinguished books entitled "Makarim al-Akhlaq", "Amali Shaykh Tusi", "Majmu'ah Warram" and "Bihar al-Anwar". With Allah's grace we have quoted it from "Bihar al-Anwar", and we will set about explaining and elucidating it as far as we .can

Abu al-Aswad Du'ili says, "When Abu Dharr was living in exile in Rabadhah, I went to visit him. While I was there with him, he narrated a hadith to me. Abu Dharr said, 'Early one morning, I went to see the Noble Prophet (S) in the Mosque. He was seated with no one present save 'Ali ('a)(٢). After being admitted in His Holiness' audience and subsequent to greeting him with respect, I availed myself

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١ - The abbreviation, "S", stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, sallallahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam [may God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny], which is [.mentioned after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S). [ed

٢ - The abbreviation, "'a" stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, 'alayhi's-salam, 'alayhim'us-salam, or 'alayha's-salam [may peace be upon him/them/her], which is mentioned after the names of the prophets, angels, Imams from the Prophet's [.progeny, and saints ('a). [ed

of the opportunity and presented my humble request to him. I said 'May my father and mother be thy ransom! Give me a piece of advice by means of which Allah will '.'grant me good

,The Noble Prophet (S) kindly stated"

O Abu Dharr! What a noble man you are, and you are surely reckoned as one of our' "...'household

The grammatical form 'af'il bih' in Arabic functions as an exclamation phrase [sighah

ta'ajjub]; that is to say, it is used when a person is surprised at something. For instance, they say 'ajmil bik' to mean "How beautiful you are!" when they are amazed at the beauty and charm of someone. Therefore, the meaning of 'akrim bik' [in the above-mentioned narration's Arabic text] is "What a noble man you are!"

The application of the term 'noble' [karim] by the Prophet (S) on such a man as Abu Dharr speaks clearly about the eminence, status and rank of that great companion in the perception of His Holiness (S). In addition, in order to lay emphasis on the above statement, the Noble Prophet (S) has included Abu Dharr among his (S) kith and kin, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). (The Noble Prophet (S) has stated the same about Salman Farsi, when he says, "Salman is one of us, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a).")

In continuation of the hadith, the Prophet (S) embarks upon advising Abu Dharr:

"I give you advice with the expectation that you will safeguard it and act upon it; because this counsel consists of all

the paths which lead to good and prosperity. If you put this will and counsel into practice, the good of both the world and hereafter will become inexpensive for you."

The term 'will' in the above statement means a piece of advice and exhortation, not the will [or testament] that is made at the time of someone's death. Also 'tariq' and 'sabil' both denote road, but 'tariq' connotes a wide and main route while 'sabil' means a subsidiary course.

Two meanings can be inferred from the term 'kiflan': one is that it denotes additional and the second meaning is twofold mercy. The Gracious Qur'an has employed 'kiflan' in the second sense, that is to say twofold mercy.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللهَ وَآمَنُوا بِرَسُولِهِ يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ...

"O you who believe! Be careful of your duty to Allah and believe in his Apostle: He will give you two portions of his mercy..."(۱)

Therefore, the purport of the Noble Prophet's (S) words will be as follows: If you put my advice into practice, you will attain twofold and additional good. But the second possibility is that 'kiflan' connotes the world and the hereafter, in which case the meaning of the sentence shall be: If you act upon what I have said, you will have attained the prosperity of the world and the hereafter for yourself.

Worship and the perception of Allah

"O Abu Dharr! Worship Allah as though you are seeing Him, because if you do not see Him, He nevertheless sees you."

If this part of the

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۱- Surat al-Hadid ۵۷:۲۸.

hadith has not been reported recurrently, then at least it is equivalent to successive narration and has been related by various channels and mainly by Abu Dharr and with different expressions. In regard to this meaning, it has thus been narrated in another hadith:

"Goodness means that you ought to worship Allah as if you see Him..."(۱)

Maybe the best advice for Abu Dharr, a man who has been trudging the path of devotion to Allah for many long years and a person who aspires to derive optimum benefit from the Prophet's (S) recipes in order to attain felicity is to inculcate in him the method of procuring benefit from worship and open a way in front of him that leads to acquiring the best fruits from his acts of adoration, and that implies having the presence of heart during worship.

The means of attaining the presence of heart is practice and exercise and perceiving the presence of Allah: that is to say man ought to always perceive himself in the presence of Allah and close to Him, because if man becomes fond of Allah, never does he get tired of conversing with Him and listening to His words; for the reason that the

more the lover is in the presence of his beloved and speaks with Him, the thirstier he .becomes for more love

The reason why we quickly get tired when performing our acts of worship and why we recite our prayers with haste and with the intention of quickly

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۶۵, section [bab] ۱, p. ۱۱۶ -۱

embarking upon our daily duties, and the reason why not only do we not feel any pleasure from worship but reckon that we are trapped in a cage once prayer takes long is because we do not perceive before whom we are standing and with whom we are talking! It is possible for us to discern our status of servitude in regard to Allah and conceive His lofty position and greatness by means of acquired knowledge, but this acquired knowledge has not had any effect on our hearts and does not give fruit to .real affinity with Allah

That which causes real and true connection with Allah is the presence of heart when we are performing acts of devotion. The only acts of worship which we are successful at fulfilling only serve to clear us from religious obligation and we do not derive the kind of benefit which we ought to gain because our acts of devotion have no life-giving spirit and are discharged without the presence of heart. Pre-occupation with worldly affairs is an impediment to rapport with Allah and the presence of heart .during acts of devotion, and that is the problem with which we are faced

It is always asked that what ought we to do in order to acquire presence of heart when performing acts of devotion? Attaining the presence of heart needs strict exercise and self-discipline. In the beginning, man has to sit in solitude and contemplate that Allah is seeing him. Some ethical mentors used

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to recommend making use of imaginative aspects of the mind during this exercise;

that is to say that if you are in spiritual retreat in a room and/or are spending your days in a secluded place, imagine that a man is hidden and is watching your conduct .and that you do not see him

Is your behavior the same when someone is watching you with when no one is watching you? Especially when that person is not an ordinary man but a person you consider as of great importance and believe that your destiny lies in his hands? You are desirous of being beloved by him and of him loving you. Can you in this case ?completely pay no heed to him and get busy with other matters

If man, with the help of exercise, conceives this point that he is in the presence of Allah and that Allah constantly looks at him and even if man himself does not see Allah, Allah nonetheless sees him, he will bit by bit attain presence of heart when performing acts of worship and such kind of worship has a life-giving spirit. This kind of worship will not only result in clearing us from duty, but will result in spiritual progress, ascendance through the stations of perfection and nearness to Allah. :Without doubt, Imam 'Ali's ('a) words bear witness to this issue

Beware of disobeying Allah in solitude because the Witness of that situation is also" (the Judge."(١

It is therefore necessary for people who

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ٣١۶, wisdom [hikmat] ٣١۶, trans. Fayd al-Islam -١

have not yet had practice to have presence of heart during prayer to set aside some time during the course of the day for sitting in seclusion and concentrating on this point that Allah is seeing them. Of course, there is no doubt that man is always in the presence of Allah and Allah sees him; as the Noble Qur'an hints at this reality in :several instances, among them

يَعْلَمُ خائِنَةَ الأَعْيُنِ وَمَا تُخْفِى الصُّدُورِ

(He knows the stealthy looks and that which the breasts conceal."(1)"

:In his short sayings, Imam 'Ali ('a) states

O people! Fear Allah who is such that when you speak He hears and when you" conceal a secret (in your hearts) he knows it. Prepare yourself to meet death which will overtake you even if you run away, catch you even if you stay and remember you (even if you forget it."(2)

In the first section of this hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) has cited worship as man's key .to prosperity

Thereafter, in the following sections, he begins to explain the stages that worship of Allah consists of. In addition to that, in the first section of the hadith, recommendation has been made with respect to the quality of worship and the fact that acts of devotion ought to have a life-giving spirit, and that spirit is the presence of heart, and in reality, no mention with regard to the origin of worship has been made, as though .that point has been taken for granted

Worship And Adoration Of Allah Is A Means Of Ascending And Rising Through The Stations Of Perfection For The Believers

It is worthy of

1- ۴۰:۱۹ Surat al-Mu'min (or Ghafir).

2- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۱۷۸, wisdom [hikmat] ۱۹۴, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

mentioning that the nature of man is concealed in devotion and adoration of Allah and man without worship has no distinction of freedom of choice over the other animals and only enjoys existential privileges, without having discharged their right (without having earned those privileges himself). A person who abstains from worshiping Allah has in reality closed the road towards human perfection on himself because attaining .human perfection is only feasible by this means

If we pay attention to the ways of life of great men, we notice that one of the inseparable principles of their lives is devotion to Allah. All the people who had the merit of achieving the status of 'Kalimullah (the Interlocutor of Allah)', 'Khalilullah (the Friend of Allah)', and 'Habibullah (the Friend of Allah)' only arrived at those lofty stations by means of traversing this course and undergoing hard and difficult trials. Not even one individual can be found who attained [even] one perfection from the volitional perfections of man without devotional servitude to Allah. In addition to what has been said, achieving stations such as the stations of contentment, certitude et cetera et cetera have to be searched for in the adoration of Allah.

Allah in the Qur'an states:

وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّکَ حَتَّی یَأْتِیکَ الْیَقِینُ

"And serve your Lord until there comes to you that which is certain."(1)

And with regard to the station of being well pleased with whatever Allah decrees [maqam-i rida], it says:

... وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّکَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا وَمِنْ آنَاءِ اللَّیْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَاَطْرَافَ

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1- Surat al-Hijr 15:99.

النَّهارِ لَعَلَّکَ تَرْضَی

"Bear then patiently what they say, and glorify your Lord by the praising of Him... before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and during the hours of the night do also glorify Him and during parts of the day, that you may be well pleased."(1)

The mission of all the Prophets ('a) has been to direct people towards adoration and worship of Allah:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِی کُلِّ اُمَّهٍ رَسُولاً أَن اعْبُدُوا اللهَ واجْتَنِبُوا الطّاغُوتَ...

"And certainly we raised in every nation an apostle saying: 'Serve Allah and shun the shaitan…'"(2)

One of the subjects on which the Gracious Qur'an lays great emphasis is that everything in existence is preoccupied with worshiping Allah, whether they like it or not:

يُسَبِّحُ لِلّهِ مَا فِى السَّمواتِ وَمَا فِى الأَرْضِ...

"Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth declares the glory of Allah…"(3)

But this glorification is existential and performs no function in the perfection of man. What plays a role in the perfection of man is worship done of his own volition, and in other than this case stones and the mountains too would attain their ultimate perfection by means of existential worship.

The importance and value of worship and devotion to Allah reaches an extent where Allah, the Exalted, states in the Gracious Qur'an that the ultimate goal of creating the jinn and mankind is worship:

وَمَا خَلَقْتَ الْجِنَّ وَالإِنْسَ الاَّ لِيَعْبُدُونِ

"And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should worship

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۱- Surat Ta Ha ۲۰:۱۳۰.

۲- Surat al-Nahl ۱۶:۳۶.

۳- Surat al-Jumu'ah ۶۲:۱.

Me."(1)

In addition to what has been said, the sense of worship is man's natural disposition; that is to say, the need for worship has been kneaded and concealed in the essence of man and this truth that no nation or community has ever existed that did not engage

in worship and adoration of one kind or another can be inferred from studying the history of religions and nations.

The stages of worship of Allah

a) Knowledge of Allah

In continuation of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) embarks upon propounding the stages of worship:

"Know O Abu Dharr that the first stage of devotion to Allah is knowledge of Him. Verily, He is the first before whom there is none, He is the One and the Only, and there is none like Him. He is the Everlasting, the Eternal. He is the One who created the heavens and the earth and that which is between them. Allah is the Knowing, the Kind and He is capable of doing anything."

In this section, the first stage of worship mentioned is knowledge of Allah; of course, cognition of Allah has a great deal of stages, but that which is necessary in worship and adoration of Allah is a general awareness of Him; man ought to know that Allah exists and He is the Creator of man and the world. If this stage of knowledge is not attained by man, the turn does not come for worship and adoration of Allah.

For this reason, this stage of knowledge is prior to worship. Of course, at

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۱- Surat al-Dhariyat ۵۱:۵۶.

the ultimate destination of his spiritual journey towards his perfection, man reaches the highest stages of cognition and awareness especially reserved for the saints [awliya'] of Allah, and we [the ordinary people] cannot find our way to its reality and truth. We know in brief that the ultimate knowledge which the saints [awliya'] of Allah attain at the end of their spiritual wayfaring is very valuable and high and that it is the last phase of devotion to Allah.

After man has attained the first stage of worship and has perceived that Allah does exist, it is incumbent to meditate upon the attributes and effects of Allah in order for that knowledge to become firm, grounded and constant so that it does not only remain as a mental conception but is turned into a present and lively awareness that leaves an impression on man. This stage of cognition and knowledge which goes with .[reflection is called 'medium knowledge' [ma'rifat-i mutawassit

Medium knowledge itself has different stages and covers a wide spectrum and man can attain those stages by way of meditation and reflection on divine signs and also by means of practical acts of devotion. It has become clear from what has been said that meditation about the divine attributes and effects and also knowing Allah better is itself worship and a kind of volitional deed and that awareness, which is one of the preliminaries of worship, is attained along with it. (Meditation and reflection about divine signs is a

p: ١٣

proximate prerequisite [muqaddamah qaribah] of cognition and attending class and (.[studying books is the remote precondition [muqaddamat-i ba'idah

b) Belief in the Prophet (S) and acknowledgement of his divine mission

At the second stage you ought to believe in me and acknowledge that Allah, the" Exalted, has appointed me to be the giver of glad tidings, the admonisher, the caller "...towards Allah by His permission and the light of guidance for all mankind

Every one of the attributes mentioned in the hadiths and Qur'an about the Noble Prophet (S) stand in need of explanation and interpretation, and if our faith in the Noble Prophet's (S) divine mission becomes strong and complete, we will not get ensnared in a great number of doubts. The lack of adequate knowledge and faith in regard to the Noble Prophet (S) in a lot of Muslims of weak faith results in their getting entangled in skepticisms and by the passage of time they get deviated from the correct path and in the end, Allah forbid, they are drawn towards disbelief; the reason for this is because they have not believed that whatever the Noble Prophet (S) says is

.correct

Some people of weak faith say that the Islamic laws which the Noble Prophet (S) brought are not binding in our age. These injunctions and decrees were meant for bringing order to the disorderly state of the people of the Arabian Peninsula in the age !of the Noble Prophet (S) and there is no more need for Islamic laws in our age

This [vain] talk is a result of their

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not having faith in Allah's Prophet (S), and if they had faith in the Noble Prophet's (S) words in which he stated, "I have been sent to all mankind", they would not have placed any limitations of time on his prophetic mission. In reality, it must be said that all the deviations that appear in religion are a result of weak faith in both Allah's .Prophet (S) and the fruits of his divine mission

(c) Love for the Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt ('a

The third stage is love for my Ahl al-Bayt ('a), those whom Allah has cleansed and" ".purified from every kind of impurity

It can generally be said that the greatness of knowing the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and their high position and loving them reaches an extent where Imam Khomeini, may Allah be pleased with him, begins his political-divine will with the Noble Prophet's (S) saying, "Verily I leave two priceless things for you, the Book of Allah and my [pure] progeny..." Perhaps it was surprising to the people of the world that in his final will the leader of the great Islamic revolution prides himself on following that Pure and Infallible .(Household of the Noble Prophet (S

We do not know what lies [concealed] in this love and affection for the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and dependence on knowledge and cognition of them and we may likely construe it to be a simple matter and mistakenly imagine that we ought to love the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) because they are the children and relatives of the Allah's Prophet

S). If it were like this, they would not have been introduced as being equivalent and) the same with the Gracious Qur'an. Emphasis upon love for the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) is not on account of their being the Noble Prophet's (S) near ones, for the reason that the Noble Prophet (S) had several wives and no such recommendation has been made in regard to any one of them but this emphasis is because Allah has purified them from .every kind of impurity

Likening the Ahl al-Bayt to Noah's ('a) vessel and the gate of repentance for the Children of Israel

Know O Abu Dharr! The Honored and Glorified Lord has made my Ahl al-Bayt ('a) like" the vessel of Noah ('a), upon which everyone who embarked got saved and whoever did not embark got drowned. Likewise, they are similar to the gate of repentance [bab hittah] for the Children of Israel which provided safety from the punishment to ".anyone who entered it

The Noble Prophet's (S) emphasis on love for the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and his likening them to the gate of repentance for the Children of Israel is not a sentimental issue so that some people might mistakenly imagine that the natural love and affection of the Noble Prophet (S) for his children and near ones caused him to always make recommendations and advices about friendship and fondness for them, but these counsels go beyond natural love and affection and are made as a result of his believing that the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) are the ship of salvation for the Islamic ummah (universal community of the Muslims) and

for the reason that he is convinced that every person lost and bewildered in the valley of perplexity will get saved from drowning in the sea full of turbulence, contortion and deviations, in the same way that Noah's ('a) community got saved from divine damnation by embarking upon Noah's ship and those who disobeyed, amongst them .Noah's son, perished and got annihilated

At the beginning of the Islamic call, when there was no talk about division and disagreement as yet in the Islamic ummah, the Noble Prophet (S) advises Abu Dharr that the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) are similar to Noah's ('a) vessel. Man perishes if he has no connection with them and if he does not emulate them. In reality, this is an admonition and advice to the Muslims who succumb to deviations, fanaticisms and discords that appear at the same time with the Noble Prophet's (S) passing away and to a number of opportunists and double-tongued hypocrites who robbed other human beings of opportunities that the only people who can save the Islamic ummah from danger and collapsing into aberration, misguidance and deviation are the Pure and Infallible Ahl .al-Bayt ('a), with 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) at their head

Thereafter, the Noble Prophet (S) likens his Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt ('a) to the gate of deliverance [bab hittah] for the Children of Israel (these two similes, the similitude to Noah's ('a) vessel and the similitude to the gate of deliverance of the Children of Israel have been

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narrated in a great number of hadiths by both the Sunnis and Shi'ahs and have reached the extent of successive transmission). When the Children of Israel were afflicted by divine wrath as a result of their sin and oppression, and when they wandered for forty years in the wilderness, out of His mercy and as a result of their penance, grief and turning back to Him, Allah once more opened the door of .repentance for them

:About this, the Qur'an states

And when We said: 'Enter this city, then eat from a plenteous (food) wherever you..." wish, and enter the gate making obeisance, and say, forgiveness.' We will forgive you (your wrongs and give more to those who do good (to others)."(١)

Every person who entered the gate, in addition to attaining honor and prosperity, also got their sins forgiven. The Noble Prophet's (S) intention in citing this similitude is to explain this point that in the same way that the Children of Israel secured their earthly

and other worldly salvation by means of entering the gate of repentance, the Muslims too will guarantee their worldly and heavenly welfare if they enter the door of knowledge and cognition of the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and follow them.

The word 'hittah' literally means spilling and destroying; by saying this word the Children of Israel were asking for forgiveness and the destruction of their sins. Allah made it a means of attaining their forgiveness. But a group among them did not have faith

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١- Surat al-Baqarah ٢:٥٨.

in Allah; they took Allah's word for a mockery and according to what has been recorded in the hadiths, in place of the word 'hittah' they pronounced the word 'hantah' which means wheat. Allah sent down upon them His divine wrath because of their moral corruption and their refusing to repent and seek forgiveness:

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا قَوْلاً غَيْرَ الَّذِى قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَنْزَلْنا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رِجْزاً مِنْ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ

"Those who were unjust changed it for a saying other than that which had been spoken to them, so We sent upon those who were unjust a pestilence from heaven, because they transgressed."(١)

The Noble Prophet (S) presented the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt ('a) as the gate whom following and obeying are a cause of worldly and heavenly prosperity and freedom from eternal retribution, but the people did not accept his word and instead of the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt ('a), they appointed other people and never used to see any difference between Imam 'Ali ('a) and the others and they used to fantasize that in the same way that Imam 'Ali ('a) is the son in law of the Noble Prophet (S), 'Uthman, too, was the Noble Prophet's (S) son in law!

The other message of this section of the hadith is that the most fundamental stage of worship consists of matters of the heart and inner deeds; that is to say, no person can

derive enough benefit from worship unless he has knowledge, faith in Allah, love

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.Surat al-Baqarah ٢:٥٩ -١

for the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and conviction in the Noble Prophet (S). For this reason, adoration is not confined to external matters and outward deeds, but the origin and roots of devotion are inner conceptions and all acts of worship that spring .from the heart

Lesson ٢: The Need for Deriving Correct Benefit from Allah's Blessings

point

O Abu Dharr! Act upon my advice so that you may become prosperous in both worlds." O Abu Dharr! The majority of people are defrauded of two graces and they do not appreciate them: one is the blessing of health and the other is the grace of leisure .((and ease

O Abu Dharr! Make the most of five things before five [other] things befall you: make" the most of your youth before your old age, your health before your illness, your ".ability before inability, your leisure before your toil and your life before death

Man is always striving to secure his prosperity and he makes every effort to achieve it; in other words, prosperity is man's natural object of desire and primary goal. For this reason, man strives to bring to hand what gives rise to bliss and to attain the roots .of success and to know the way of attaining prosperity

That is why the Noble Prophet (S) emphasizes that if his words are acted upon, man will attain his natural object of desire; that is to say man will bring to hand both worldly and heavenly prosperity and if the human being does not put into practice what the

p: ٢٠

Noble Prophet (S) has advised, he gets deprived of that prosperity. This emphasis is meant to bring about more preparedness and acceptance in man, like the doctor's emphatic advice to his patient to definitely follow the directions on the prescription so as to recuperate his health, otherwise there is no doubt that man visits the doctor to :recover his well-being. After that emphasis, the Noble Prophet (S) states

".O Abu Dharr! Most people are robbed of two graces: leisure and health"

Health and leisure, two unknown favors

Health and leisure are two priceless blessings which Allah, the Exalted, has granted to mankind, but most people do not appreciate its value and easily lose it. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) advices Abu Dharr to appreciate the value of these .two blessings and not to easily lose them like the other people

Allah, the Exalted, has placed countless and priceless graces at man's disposal but man easily loses them, perhaps owing to the fact that he expended no effort at acquiring them. Not only does he not discharge their right, but also uses them in an .iniquitous way; a manner which not only does not benefit him, but harms him as well

Health is one of the priceless blessings which a man in good condition pays no heed to and only knows its worth once he gets afflicted by illness, like the fish which swims in .water and does not appreciate its value until it is removed from the water

Not long ago, a frightening

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thing happened to one of our friends; he narrated that while giving a sermon on the pulpit, he suddenly lost his voice and no matter how much he tried to continue his sermon, he failed. Finally, he came down from the pulpit and was taken to the hospital .where, by Allah's grace and favor, he got well after a while

Man rarely meditates upon Allah's graces; blessings such as the power of speech, and hardly thanks Allah for that blessing. He only reflects about it the moment that his

voice is lost and he no longer has the power to speak. All too often, he is ready to give .up all his wealth at that moment of need

For a moment we ought to reflect about health and meditate over what blessing is higher than being healthy and free from a thousand diseases which threaten our bodies and that we are not even afflicted by any one of them. For that reason, we are enjoying the benefits of enormous wealth at every moment, even though this health .is not stable and permanent and is likely to be lost at every moment

:Word like this has been recorded elsewhere, that the Noble Prophet (S) stated

"There are two blessings that are always not thanked for: health and security."(۱)

Leisure is the second blessing which the Noble Prophet (S) has hinted at, and it denotes ease and the lack of trouble. Man is faced with different conditions and situations in his life. He spends some of

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۸۱, p. ۱۷۰, section [bab] ۱ -۱

those opportunities at leisure and ease and he can contemplate about himself and perceive the concealed aspects of his being and more often than not it happens that .he intends to remedy his ethical and psychological deviations

He plans to meditate about his destiny and to sit in solitude in a secluded corner to embark upon worship and/or study with peace of mind. For every reason, physical and psychological tranquility reigns over his entire being and this peace has presented a golden opportunity for him to derive the utmost advantage from opportunities and make use of every moment in the direction of his perfection. In contrast, it is possible that man gets confronted by a period in his life which, for different reasons, he is deprived of leisure and ease and regrets every moment of it, but what benefit is there in such regret because time lost is never regained. With :regard to making the most of opportunities, Imam 'Ali ('a) says

"Opportunities and life pass like a cloud, therefore perceive good opportunities." (1)

Problems sometimes arise as a result of being entangled in family issues and bearing the responsibilities of children and wife, and at other times they spring up because of social occupations and public responsibilities. These problems absorb all the spiritual and physical abilities of a human being and do not afford man a moment's opportunity to meditate. In the period after the Islamic revolution in Iran, a lot of government officials had gotten affected by this condition and they

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1- ٩١ [bab] Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. ١۶, p. ٨۴, section.

did not even have a break to attend to their personal affairs.

In contrast, some people are always pursuing vain amusements, and do not even know how to make use of the time of their invaluable lives. They do not know whether they should solve the crossword puzzle in the newspaper or they should spend the hours of the night watching television films? Or should they sit watching sports news? Or get busy with playing chess? They are like a person who has amassed a lot of wealth and searches for a place where he can set it on fire bit by bit, and derive pleasure from watching that. If we encountered such a man, we would surely say that he were mad, heedless of the fact that many of us are afflicted by this same insanity and are busy burning the capital of our lives, life itself, which is by no means comparable to the wealth of this world, in the fire of sensual desire.

In reality, this kind of a person has to be called a loser and a man swindled, because a swindled man is he who exchanges his priceless merchandise for valueless goods or gets less than their worth. There is no asset so prized that it can be compared to life, and it cannot be sold at a price less than paradise. Owing to this fact, appreciate the value of leisure before it is lost and take up work that is more profitable and praiseworthy than

.the rest of the occupations

Youth is a period of Vitality And Liveliness

O Abu Dharr! Make the most of five things before five other things: the first is to“ ”...make the most of youth before old age

The short period of youth, which is accompanied by happiness and vigor, is considered as the best period of man’s life and has a special reckoning. Even if life and living are great favors on the whole, but still youth is a twofold blessing. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) initially mentions the period of young age and lastly hints at the importance of the principle of life itself. Despite that the period of life includes the period of youth as well His Holiness (S) has cited it at the beginning .(because this age is viewed with special importance by the Noble Prophet (S

Imam Khomeini, may Allah be pleased with him, repeatedly used to say, “O Youths! Comprehend and make the most of the period of youth.” The reason is because the blessing of youth is the highest grace which if made use of in a correct and commendable manner can raise man and make him ascend through the spiritual stations towards Allah, something which is less likely to be attained during the period of old age. That is why this truth has been explicitly stated in the words of the Imams ,(‘a) too, and in this regard, Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) says

The Qur’an gets mixed with the flesh and blood of every believing youth who“

p: ۲۵

(recites it.”(۱

The period of youth is a period of flexibility and accepting the truth. During this age man can build himself and free his self from ugly traits. It is during the period of youth :that man

;a) gets influenced by the truth more than any other period

;b) enjoys a healthy body and can easily discharge his social obligations

c) can perform his religious duties in the best possible form because of having a strong body and spirit;

d) possesses enough strength for remedying ethical vices;

e) can achieve high academic levels by making use of his body and mind;

f) is most likely to have a strong will and iron resolution;

g) can, without feeling tired, think well and meditate for hours on end;

h) can firmly establish in himself virtuous attributes and practices at a high level.

And vice versa old age is a period of weakness and decrepitude, a time of the final shaping of man's personality and of inflexibility; and in brief, it is a period of the predominance of physical infirmity and psychological feebleness.

In the Glorious Qur'an, old age has been referred to as 'shayb (hoary)' in three instances and it has been interpreted as 'shaykh (old age)' in four cases. And in most occasions, the natural weakness of this age has either been explicitly stated or hinted at; for example, it has been stated about Prophet Zakariya ('a):

قالَ رَبِّ اِنِّى وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّى وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأسُ شَيْبًا...

"He said: My Lord! Surely my bones are weakened and my head

1- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷, p. ۳۰۵.

flares with hoariness, and, my Lord! I have never been unsuccessful in my prayer to Thee..."(1)

And likewise, with regard to the stages of man's life, it states:

... ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّهٍ ضَعْفًا وَشَيْبَهً...

Then he gave strength after weakness, then ordained weakness and hoary hair…" after strength…"(2)

In the rest of the explanations the Qur'an has in one way or another hinted at the (disability and feebleness that goes with old age.)

Therefore, the period of youth is a very precious opportunity for cleansing oneself of ethical vices, a thing which is very hard to do during old age, but unfortunately man does not believe anything without feeling or experiencing it; that is to say, he does not understand the pain of elderliness until he has aged, and no matter how many times the difficulties of this period are made known to him, he still does not acknowledge the truth as it ought to be admitted.

We have witnessed great people who possessed very lofty moral perfections, but one point of moral weakness had remained in them which they either had not recognized during their period of adolescence or they had not undertaken to correct it. For whatever reason, that weak point had remained like an incurable chronic illness in their personalities.

The Need For Appreciating Health And Ability

The second is that man ought to make the most of his health before getting afflicted by illness.

The third is that man ought to make the most of his ability before his inability.

If you are able to cope

۱- ۱۹:۴ Surat Maryam.

۲- ۳۰:۵۴ Surat al-Rum.

with your life, no matter how simple and plain it is, and economic needs have not made you dependent on other people, you ought to appreciate and make the most of

this blessing before, Allah forbid, you are afflicted by abject poverty and distress and you become dependent on other human beings for the daily management of your life. If at the present there are simple facilities at your disposal and you can spend the day with contentment and carry on with your studies, you ought to make the most of this opportunity and apprehend the day when you will be compelled to quit your studies and get occupied with other jobs for the acquisition of the daily needs of this same simple life. If you can presently pass the days of your life ascetically, make use of the opportunity at hand and instead of thinking about privations and wants, contemplate about what you possess at the present moment and appreciate it. The period of your self-sufficiency is a good time for you to help others; for this reason hold the hands of .the needy before the arrival of the turn of poverty and destitution

It is necessary to pay heed to this point that poverty and deprivation which result in disgrace do not accord with the noble status of the human being, and they have been rebuked as forbidden attributes. Allah does not approve of lowliness for his slaves, but desires honor and glory for them. Therefore, man has

to make utmost effort to reduce his dependence on other people and strive to the last extent of his ability to confront poverty by adopting values such as contentment, magnanimity of taste, abstinence from pomp and avoidance of waste, have to be well .learned and acted upon

The fourth point is that the human being ought to make the most of the period of .leisure and ease before the arrival of the period of entanglement

A lot of discussion has been held in regard to the contents of this sentence, but it is necessary to be reminded that the Noble Prophet's (S) intention is not that one ought to shirk from obligations and refuse to shoulder social responsibilities and rather prefer unemployment. This is a negative perception. As likely as not, the Noble Prophet's (S) intention is that you ought to appreciate the value of these treasured moments when you can freely choose and decide without imposition and make use of these opportunities to make the best choices before you are compelled to accept

uncalled for responsibilities and imposed duties and before you are divested of the .power to choose of your own accord

This World's Life Is A Ground Of Choices, Growth And Spiritual Ascension

.The fifth is that man ought to make the most of life before the arrival of death

The blessing of life is a comprehensive and complete favor which has been mentioned after the rest of the graces. In reality, all the other blessings are affixed to the gift of life. If there were no life, there would remain

no room for the other graces. For this reason, the root and fountainhead of the rest of the gifts is the blessing of the life of this world, which has freely been given by Allah to his slaves and even if man enjoys the life of the hereafter after death, but still he gets deprived of the ability to perform volitional deeds, to freely choose and to make decisions. It is there that he regrets his past life, losing opportunities and making bad choices, and he requests to return to the world in order to make up for past vices, but .his petition will not be granted

حَتّى إذا جاءَ اَحَدَهُمْ الْمَوْتُ قالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ * لَعَلّى اَعْمَلُ صالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلاّ اِنَّها كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قائِلُها وَمَنْ ورائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ اِلى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ

Until when death overtakes one of them, he says: 'Send me back, my Lord, send me" back. Haply I may do good in that which I have left.' By no means! It is a (mere) word (that he speaks; and before them is a barrier until the day they are raised."(۱

Some of the great men used to recommend that at the time of sleeping, you ought to imagine that this sleep may possibly not have an awakening and the Angel of Death :will seize your soul in the state of sleep, because the Glorious Qur'an states

اللهُ يَتَوَفَّى الأَنْفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِها والَّتِى لَمْ تَمُتْ فِى مَنامِها...

Allah takes the souls at the time of their death, and those that"

۱- Surat al-Mu'minun ۲۳:۹۹-۱۰۰.

(die not during their sleep…"(۱)

The soul almost gets separated from the body during sleep, and if the hour of man's death arrives, it gets completely detached from his body; it is for this reason that in continuation of the same blessed verse, Allah states:

... فَيُمْسِكُ الَّتِى قَضَى عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الأُخْرى إِلى اَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى... سوره الزمر: ۴۲

"… Then He withholds those on whom He has passed the decree of death and sends the others back till an appointed term; most surely there are signs in this for those who reflect…"

In reality, man travels half the journey towards death when he sleeps; that is why great men have advised that at the time of sleeping, imagine that after the soul has been separated from the body, it will never again return, and when you wake up, you must thank Allah that He has granted existence to your body once again and He has granted you life once more.

To put it another way, you should imagine that you have gone to purgatory (the interval between life and death), and that your unworthy deeds have become apparent, and that you are being called to account for them and you are under admonition, and at that time you ask the angels which are residing in the proximity of Allah to let you return to the world and as per your request they grant you the permission; now that you have returned to the world and you have once again got

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۱- Surat al-Zumar ۳۹:۴۲.

the chance to perform works, what are you going to do and how are you going to be?

We ought to appreciate the value of this second chance and make the most of every moment of it because a time will come when man will deeply desire for saying just one "la ilaha illa Allah (There is no deity save Allah)" and according to the words of :(Imam 'Ali ('a

Whoever falls short of performing good deeds falls into grief, and Allah has nothing" (to do with him who spares nothing from his wealth in the name of Allah."(١

Lesson ٣: Correct Perception of the Realities of Life and Making Optimum Use of [Man's] Lifespan

Making Timely Use Of Opportunities And Keeping Protracted Hopes At Bay

O Abu Dharr! [Beware] lest you procrastinate praiseworthy deeds on account of your" ".protracted hopes

This expression is a completion of the Noble Prophet's (S) previous saying and it) underscores making timely use of opportunities and not wasting opportunities or (.moments of life

Procrastination [taswif] is one of the cankers of the soul which obstructs the fulfillment of good and praiseworthy deeds and that is why it has been an object of distain in the hadiths. Procrastination denotes putting obligations off with the hope of discharging them later. This state can be caused by a great deal of factors, but its chief and primary cause—as has been mentioned in this section—is man's delusive dreams; that is to say, man does not discharge today's obligations in the hope of staying alive until tomorrow when he will carry them out. When the following day arrives, he again plays for time and hopes for the

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ١١۴۶, pithy aphorisms ١٢٢, trans. Fayd al-Islam -١

other day and thus months and years pass while he puts off his work. The Noble Prophet (S) states that if you desire to cleanse your inner self of this quality and

attribute, you ought to imagine that you only have this very day and hour and moment .and you will not have another opportunity to live after this

The concept of procrastination, like a great number of other ethical concepts, ranging from moral virtues to vices, is a graded notion and has different stages. These graded axioms vary with regard to different individuals, ranging from believers to unbelievers inclusive, and even in regard to the levels of faith. Some of its levels are ordinary obligatory deeds, others are emphasized obligatory works and others are ordinary recommended acts and others emphasized recommended works. At times, some of .these levels are so accurate that their imagination is impossible for ordinary people

The Stages Of Negligence

The first stage of procrastination is seeking ease and complacency with regard to worldly affairs, which results in man putting off his works. This bad habit is not related to belief; it is also possible for an unbeliever to be afflicted by it in the same way that a believer does, because unbelievers too sometimes get lazy and negligent as regards their worldly affairs. This bad trait and disposition, which causes man to put off his .duties, is considered as an undesirable habit both by the believer and the unbeliever

Of course, this quality is uglier for a believing man

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because if he gets used to putting off his obligations for later, bit by bit this quality becomes his permanent disposition of mind and spreads by contagion to his religious obligations too, resulting in his not performing divine obligations on time. That is the reason why it has been said that if a man were lazy in his worldly affairs, this quality gradually becomes his permanent trait of mind giving rise to carelessness and .negligence being extended to matters of the hereafter

The second stage of procrastination is laziness in performing religious obligations and duties. This indolence, based on the three divisions of obligatory duties, is also divided :into three sections

Laziness and carelessness at performing long and time-consuming obligatory .۱ deeds, like the five daily prayers, every one of which has its own specified long time. Some people are lazy and torpid at performing these kinds of prayers, and always put them off to be performed at the last moments. Even if this kind of indolence and carelessness is not haram (prohibited by Islamic laws), it is still considered as an .indecent act

Laziness at performing obligatory actions that ought to be done with immediacy, .۲ even if their urgency is not absolute, in the sense that if they are not discharged at the first opportunity, they have to be fulfilled with urgency at the second opportunity and likewise if they have not been performed at the second opportunity, they have to be ,discharged at the other opportunities; like repentance

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whose incumbency is obligatory at the first opportunity and whose putting off is forbidden [haram] by Islamic law but it does not imply that its incumbency is nullified if .procrastinated

Laziness and heedlessness with regard to discharging limited-time obligatory .۳ works, like fasting, which ought to be done within a restricted and limited time. Some people procrastinate at discharging these responsibilities within their specified time and tell themselves that they will make up for them later in the form of qada' (belated religious obligations performed outside their prescribed time). Even though the sin committed by such an individual is less than that of a man whose decision is not to make up at all for belated divine duties, nonetheless this action is haram (forbidden by .(Islamic law

Asceticism And Wrong Interpretations

The other point worthy of mentioning is that matters have been mentioned in a lot of verses of the Glorious Qur'an and the hadiths which might have different and sometimes conflicting interpretations, and their explication calls for perfect expertise and professional knowledge in religious sciences for the reason that in such

circumstances the possibility of error and the likelihood of inadmissible .understandings is high

For example, there are verses of the Glorious Qur’an and the hadiths that have been quoted whose apparent purport is rebuking, praising or retreating from the world, and whose interpretations vary and sometimes oppose each other. One of those interpretations is the Sufi version which is arrived at without paying attention to the other aspects of Islam and the explicit

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religious sciences. In the Sufi point of view, man has to retreat from this world’s life and engage in worship in solitude far from the society and/or have companionship with animals, regardless that this kind of inference is in direct contradiction to the verses of the Glorious Qur’an, the hadiths and the categorical primary principles of .religion

If self-reclusion were the primacy of religion, then what fate will befall religious social obligations such as spending money and wealth in Allah’s cause, fighting against oppression, enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, and striving for the establishment of an Islamic government, which are among the explicit essentials of Islam!? And where, apart from in the society, are they supposed to be fulfilled? Can these responsibilities be discharged in privacy and seclusion? It is for this reason that deduction of religious principles calls for expertise in the whole collection of religious .sciences and it demands attention to all the aspects and dimensions of religion

In response to this misconception, it ought to be said that seeking the world is reprehensible if it is perceived as the ultimate goal of life. But if the world becomes a means of attaining the perfection of the hereafter, not only is it irreprehensible, but praiseworthy and commendable as well. Conceiving the world as a means of attaining the hereafter has itself levels, some of which are necessary and some of which are .considered as part of human perfections

The utmost limit of seeking the world is

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that deriving benefit from the pleasures of the world and engaging in material issues ought not to lead a human being to quitting the divine obligatory works and committing forbidden actions. Seeking the world is forbidden by Islamic law [haram] if it leads to committing sins and quitting obligatory [wajib] deeds and if this materialism becomes firm as a bad habit and permanent trait of the mind, fighting against it .[becomes incumbent [wajib

From the Islamic point of view, an exemplary man is a person who does not believe in the primacy of the world and does not perform worldly actions, even the permissible ones, for attaining materialistic pleasures. Insightful and perceptive people have attained this stage, which is the highest human achievement; that is to say, they conduct themselves in such a way that all their deeds and behavior, even their breathing, are considered as acts of devotion to Allah. All their physical actions and conduct, such as their eating, physical exercise, and even the permissible coital gratifications, are prerequisites for matters of the hereafter and it is for this reason .[that they are considered as either obligatory [wajib] or recommendable [mustahabb

Asceticism and belief in the primacy of the hereafter

For every reason, believing or not believing in the primacy of the hereafter is delicate and intricate and its criterion of sincerity cannot be based on man's word, but is dependent on the inner intentions of individuals: for instance, if man eats food in order to derive pleasure, he has believed in the primacy of materialism even

p: ۳۷

if he denies that by word of mouth, and if his intention is to thank Allah by means of deriving gratification from the taste of the food, he has believed in the primacy of the .hereafter because his aim is thanksgiving to Allah

It is for this reason that in the Glorious Qur'an, after mentioning a part of Allah's favors, thanksgiving to Him has been referred to as an aim of making use of His graces. For that reason, the goal is thanksgiving [to Allah] and this occurs when all of

man’s physical actions acquire a divine color. Most people do not pay attention to the spiritual aspect of their lives and have gotten so attached to physical gratification that they cannot have any other goal than materials and physical satisfaction. There is no doubt that man needs a mentor in order to procure spiritual states because it is likely .for him to stray from the limits of moderation and get propelled towards extremism

People who want to traverse the course of spiritual perfection and its edification ought to make the pre-eminence and superiority of heavenly pleasures become embedded in their minds in order to weaken their worldly inclinations and reduce their materialistic pleasure seeking. In order to overlook worldly pleasures, they have to inculcate in themselves the conviction that material gratifications are nothing and .valueless in comparison to heavenly pleasures

It is for this reason that in their statements, the Noble Prophet (S) and the Pure and Infallible Imams

a) seek to lead people towards giving preference to the hereafter and to encourage‘) them to forgo the world and entirely free themselves from nature because if man considers the world as a precondition for the hereafter, not only is he not a materialist, but also a seeker of paradise. All too often availing oneself of permissible pleasures is itself a prerequisite of not committing forbidden actions [or seeking forbidden pleasures], and it is for this reason that they are considered as acts of worship. In addition to this, availing oneself of permissible pleasures results in .spiritual growth and preparedness for discharging higher obligations

,In regard to dividing daily hours, Imam Musa ibn Ja‘far, (‘a) states

Also set aside one hour for the purpose of deriving benefit from permissible“ pleasures, because it is by deriving benefit from what is halal (permissible) that you ”.can have the vigor to perform the rest of the duties

As we have already been reminded, the Noble Prophet (S) has alluded to this truth

that the cause for procrastination is man's dreams of achieving pleasure; that is to say, man is always trying to attain his worldly pleasures and this in itself motivates him to put his obligations off. In other words, the issue revolves around whether he uses opportunities to attain transient physical pleasures or to achieve perpetual heavenly pleasures, but because he sees the world readily available and accessible, he expends his time and efforts trying to bring it to hand; in reality

man has more faith in the world than he has belief in the hereafter and he prefers the transient and short-lived gratifications to the imperishable pleasures of the eternal paradise. It is surprising that most of us are afflicted by a degree of polytheism because we have no faith in the superiority of the hereafter over the world:

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ اَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللهِ اِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

"And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating others (with Him)."(۱)

Man is polytheistic once he performs an action for other than Allah, even if it is for attaining the reward of the hereafter. In pure monotheism, there is no other goal save Allah; even fear of hell and eagerness for paradise are not ultimate aims in pure monotheism, as Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"O my Lord! I do not worship Thee because of fear of hell and/or because of craving for paradise, but because you are worthy of my devoted adoration."(۲)

Protracted hopes endanger man's prosperity, and it is for this reason that Imam 'Ali's ('a) biggest dread was in case people should get afflicted by prolonged hopes and sacrifice divine duties for their own desires:

"I fear two things greatly; the first thing is pursuing vain passions and desires of the soul and the other thing is protracted hopes, because chasing sensual desires results in forgetting the hereafter."(۳)

Discharging Religious Duties And Obligations Promptly

In continuation of his advice with regard to abstaining from procrastination, the Noble ,Prophet (S) states

".Because you only have today and tomorrow is not yours"

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.Surat Yusuf ۱۲:۱۰۶ -۱
.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۴۱, p. ۱۴ -۲
.Ibid., vol. ۷۷, p. ۴۱۹ -۳

Noble Prophet (S) advises Abu Dharr not to put off today's obligations until tomorrow, for the reason that none can be certain about tomorrow's coming, and assuming that tomorrow does come, there will still be other responsibilities to be discharged on that day. When you fulfill your duties today, you will have no regret if tomorrow never comes, but once you put off your obligations until tomorrow and it occurs that tomorrow never comes, you will carry this regret and contrition to the next world with .you

Therefore, one ought to think about this very moment and make the most of the present life and abstain from procrastination and putting obligations off in the hope of discharging them another day. When studying and doing research, we ought not to tell ourselves that time is plentiful and we will study tomorrow, because we will have :other responsibilities in the future

"If you had a tomorrow, keep discharging your duties just like today, and if tomorrow ".never comes, you will not be remorseful about your today's negligence

It is possible for an individual to feel contrition for not being successful at performing more responsibilities in spite of having fulfilled his daily duties, but he no longer feels remorseful when he takes the limitations of man's ability into consideration and pays heed to the fact that he has discharged his obligations to the utmost extent of his

.ability

To complete the previous issues and to emphasize the point that one ought not to sit idly waiting

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:for tomorrow, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! How so many a people there are who wake up in the morning but do" not see the sun go down, and what a great number of human beings there are waiting ".for tomorrow but will not see it

Notice and observe how the Noble Prophet (S) prepares the mind of the listener so that he may make the most of the moments of his life. In the beginning, he urges the listener to think about the extent to which man can be optimistic about tomorrow for .him to put off his responsibilities until then

If he has no confidence in his tomorrow coming, why does he put his obligations off until then? When the time for the afternoon prayers arrives, what makes him so sure that he will remain alive for another hour so as to delay his prayers? It is self-evident that if he recites his prayers on time, he will not be regretful later and he can even .better manage to perform his other responsibilities

The Thought Of Death Terminates Protracted Hopes

O Abu Dharr! If you contemplate about the hour of death and perceive with what" ".speed it is coming, you will hate its deception and snare

The best way to fight prolonged hopes and their deception is to think about death and to know that the hour of death frustrates protracted dreams and takes man :hopelessly to the other world, as Imam 'Ali ('a) states

And he who has fallen in love with the world), then it)"

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fills his heart with grief which keeps alternating in the black part of his heart, some grief worrying him and another giving him pain. This goes on till the suffocation of death overtakes him. He is flung dead in the open while his life veins are severed."(۱)

Again, Imam 'Ali ('a) states elsewhere:

"As for (one) of its lessons, a man reaches near realization of his desires when ... suddenly the approach of his death cuts them; then neither is the desire achieved nor the desirer spared..."(۲)

The Intermediary Role Of The World

Further on in the hadith, the Prophet (S) states:

"O Abu Dharr! Live like either a stranger or a passer-by in this world and consider yourself as a dead human being."

The Noble Prophet (S) recommends that in the world man ought to be like a stranger who enters a town and he must observe how one who has no friends and acquaintances lives. With regard to his not being able to gain fondness with anyone, can such a man engage in feasting and entertainment? The believer's true abode is the hereafter, and he is like a way-farer and passer-by in this world. Therefore, he does not intend to spread facilities around himself and embark upon feasting, drinking and entertainment. By the same token, the Noble Prophet (S) advises that man ought to be in the world like a traveler who does not [even] have the opportunity to stop and rest.

It is likely that attention to the apparent purports of such statements would lead man to misinterpretation and

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۱- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۲۵۶, wisdom [hikmat] ۳۵۹, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

۲- Ibid., p. ۳۵۳, sermon [khutbah] ۱۱۳.

most probably lead him to thinking about secluding himself from the rest of the people

and abandon thinking about procuring a house and starting a family and finally [lead him into] abstaining from the blessings and graces of this world and steer him to only reflecting upon the hereafter because that is man's eternal abode! Beyond the shadow of doubt, such an understanding is not compatible with the basic principles of Islam. All too often, it is likely that acquiring friends and companions, founding a household, saving wealth and buying a house et cetera et cetera all pivot on the hereafter and at the same time it occurs that love for this world is not man's motive, rather his incentive is paying heed to the hereafter and devotion to Allah, because by means of the world and utilizing its facilities and pleasures, man can attain heavenly .perfections and gain nearness to Allah

In reality, an individual who has designated the hereafter as his goal has set the world as a means of attaining the hereafter. Now if a human being cannot [completely] renounce the world and he makes use of it as a means of attaining the hereafter, then at least let him be like a passer-by who rests only to the extent of replenishing his powers. Even if in such an individual's point of view worldly affairs are primary and he cannot dispense with them altogether, at least let him use them to the extent of rejuvenating his abilities

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and securing the needs and necessities from the facilities and permissible [pleasures] of this world; as Imam Musa ibn Ja'far ('a), in regard to this issue, has stated that you ought to set aside a part of your day for the purpose of pursuing permissible [halal] .pleasures

The sentence "consider yourself as a dead human being" is the highest expression which the Noble Prophet (S) has employed, but it is likely to be understood wrongly. When the Noble Prophet (S) states that you should count yourself among the dead, the apparent meaning is that in the same way that the dead are deprived of the most basic needs of life such as eating, you too ought to abstain from the world and from seeking its benefits. However, the Prophet's (S) intention is that you should pay .attention to your permanent place of abode

When the life of this world is [viewed as] a stopping-place, and a bridge for crossing over to the ever-lasting world, your attention has to be fixed on your final place of residence and your effort has to be concentrated on preparing yourself and acquiring enough provisions so as not to become ashamed and apologetic there. For that reason, the Noble Prophet's (S) intention is not that you ought to abstain from earthly affairs altogether and quit thinking about securing livelihood, buying amenities for .yourself and your children's future and their ease

Improper deductions from the verses of the Gracious Qur'an and hadiths have had an old history

p: ۴۵

among the Muslims; such as when the verse about divine retribution was revealed, some of the Noble Prophet's (S) companions left their homes, abstained from coital relations with their wives, refrained from eating [good] foods and wearing [good] clothes, and [instead only] got busy with worshiping Allah! When news of this reached the Noble Prophet (S), he called them and said, "Why do you act like this? I, who am a Prophet, mix with my wives and derive benefit from the gifts of the world alongside my acts of devotion and fasting. You too ought to imitate me and do not forsake your ".homes and lives

With regard to the previous matters, mentioning this point is necessary that all too often it happens that an individual lives a life of abundance in this world and still does not go under its influence, because he can employ all material matters as a means and way of attaining the truth. By the same token, it ought to be taken into consideration that when this world is castigated, it does not imply that we ought to consider its natural and material gifts as having no value [at all], because they are all .Allah's creations and His divine signs

But criticism is laid on man's point of view and intention; castigation is made when he gets addicted to the world and its gifts and sets them as his main goal and he becomes heedless of their intermediary role. For that reason, the real object of

.castigation is man and his improper way of employing material tools

:In praise of the Noble Prophet (S), Imam 'Ali ('a) says

The Holy Prophet) treated this world disdainfully and regarded it as low. He held it)" contemptible and hated it. He realized that Allah kept it away from him with intention and spread it out for the others by way of contempt. For this reason, he kept away from it of his own volition, banished its recollection from his heart and mind and wished that its recollection should remain hidden from his eye so that he should not (acquire any clothing from it, or hope for staying in it."(۱

O Abu Dharr! When you wake up in the morning do not hope to see the sun set and" ".when you sleep at night do not hope to see the sun rise

Lesson ۴: The Prophet's (S) Recommendation to Make Good Use of Present Abilities

point

Previously, sections of the hadith of Abu Dharr have been the subject of discourse. In those sections, emphasis has been laid on strengthening faith, making the most of opportunities and appreciating life and Allah's graces. Now those same issues will be .repeated so as to have a deeper effect on the hearts of the believers

When man has believed in Allah, the Exalted, the Day of Resurrection and divine values, he desires to be spotless before Allah and be the object of His favor, but this is dependent on him knowing the value of his life and to also know how to put it to use in order

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۲۹۴, sermon [khutbah] ۱۰۸, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

to attain the goal, which is eternal bliss. In continuation, the Prophet (S) warns man against being afflicted by heedlessness, sin and deviation, because it is likely that the

hour of death finds him in that state and he gets propelled to the everlasting world [in .[a] guilty and conscience-stricken [state

The Role Of Meditation Upon Death And The Consequences Of Sin

O Abu Dharr! Beware lest your death finds you while in a state of sin in which case no" opportunity remains for compensation and repentance and for returning to the world, no heirs of yours will extol you for the inheritance you have left them and Allah, the ".Exalted, will not accept the excuse which you will make

As has been said before this, the Prophet (S) has articulated some of the ethical concepts with different expressions and the aim of repeating these ethical notions is .to produce higher effects on the hearts of the believers

As you will understand after a short review of the verses of the Qur'an, a great deal of verses have been repeated in various instances, and even the exact words have been repeated in some cases, like the blessed verse "Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?" that has been repeated thirty one times in Surat al-Rahman. Even if every verse acquires its own special meaning with every repetition, the role of every repetition in producing more profound effects on the hearts cannot be denied. In our daily actions repetition plays a considerable role in changing behavior and producing either good

.or bad habits

It has been narrated that when the Qur'anic verse, "And enjoin prayer on your followers, and steadily adhere to it; We do not ask you for subsistence, and the (good) end is for guarding against evil;"(۱) was revealed, the Prophet (S) used to go to 'Ali's ('a) house for eight successive months and used to state, "Prayer! Allah's mercy be upon thee, 'Allah has willed to drive away uncleanliness from you the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) ".'and keep you pure

If the Prophet (S) used to go to 'Ali's ('a) once every day, it can be inferred that this)

action was repeated two hundred and forty times, despite that this action was apparently repeated five times a day.)

The outcome of the Prophet's (S) statement is that if man does not know what actions lead him towards prosperity and which ones lead him to perdition, he gets entangled in sin in the end and if death catches him while committing vice, he has earned the worst losses for his soul and he has lost the gem of life and existence, youth and divine gifts in the way of sin and in return has earned nothing save destruction. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) states that you should fear lest the hour of death comes while you are committing sin and get your soul in that state. In that case, you forever do not have another opportunity to make up for your sins and it will remain

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۱- Surat Ta Ha ۲۰:۱۳۲.

available in your record, because no permission will be given to any to return to the world.

With regard to this, the Qur'an states:

حَتّى اِذَا جاءَ اَحَدَهُم الْمَوْتُ قالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ * لَعَلّى اَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيما تَرَكْتُ كَلاَّ اِنَّها كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُها...

"Until when death overtakes one of them, he says: 'Send me back, my Lord, send me back; haply I may do good in that which I have left.' By no means! it is a (mere) word that he speaks; and before them is a barrier until the day they are raised..."(۱)

Man will abstain from sin if at the time of committing vice he thinks about this point that it is likely for the hour of death to arrive while he is in a sinful state. Supposing that man too earns a lot of profit in his illicit businesses and transactions and leaves it as inheritance for his heirs, will it bear him any good? Are they not going to utilize this inheritance for their own pleasure-seeking and forget about him? Even though they were to praise him, what benefit has it got for his condition? On the other hand, he will

meet Allah with all his errors and offences. Now, what pretexts has he got to present to Allah? He who knew that what he was doing was prohibited [haram] and is contrary to the orders of Allah and proof had been made complete upon him, what pretexts is he going to present in the presence of

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.Surat al-Mu'minun ۲۳:۹۹-۱۰۰ -۱

?Allah and what response is he going to give to the fire that will be dropped upon him

O Abu Dharr! I have never seen a fire like the fire of Hell, which [even] the sleeping" seek to run away from, and I have never seen [anything] like Heaven, which is desired ".by even the sleeping

The Need For Appreciating Life

O Abu Dharr! Be more miserly with your life than [you are] with your money and" ".wealth

If a person saves money with a lot of difficulty and effort, does he freely place it at the disposal of other people? For the reason that he expended a lot of effort for its acquisition, he does not easily lose it and knows its value. On the contrary, it is likely that without feeling the slightest loss, man spends hours of his life pursuing vanity. In other words, it is likely for one to be mean with his money but not be miserly with his .life despite the fact that the value of life cannot be compared to the value of money

If the life of a person falls in danger, he is ready to spend many times all his belongings in order to save his life. Suppose that all gold, silver and diamond mines were at the disposal of an individual and it is said to him that he ought to give up all his ?life in order to stay alive. Does he not give it up

Man desires worldly facilities for his own use, now of what benefit

are they if he does not stay alive? For this reason, his life has more value than all the wealth of the world. Why then are you losing this precious asset freely? Not only do you lose it freely, but sometimes earn divine wrath in return for it? If losing money in the free air is not a wise action, how then can losing life freely in pursuit of transient ?passions be wise

Do not put this invaluable asset at the free disposal of companion, friend, wife and friends. Do not squander it in vain activities for the sake of pleasing others, worse is that you should waste it on committing transgressions and sins. Yes, if for the good pleasure of Allah man expends his life pleasing others, gladdening his wife and children and his believing brother and/or on alleviating the needs of a believer, not only has he not freely lost his life but has earned the good pleasure of Allah whose value is more than the whole world. But it is not rational to expend life which is worth the whole world for the sake of amusing and entertaining this one and that one, .because in this instance you will have lost it freely

Discharging Duties On Time And Not Being Anxious About The Following Day

O Abu Dharr! Does anyone of you expect something other than wealth which leads to" disobedience, or poverty which results in forgetting Allah, or sickness which ruins his body or old age which withholds him from activity, or death which arrives hurriedly, or the arrival

of the seditious imposter, or the approach of the Day of Resurrection which is more ".dreadful and bitter

These expressions are another emphasis on making the most of opportunities in the direction of discharging obligations. If man does not employ the energy and opportunities that are at his disposal to fulfill his divine duties now, then which opportunities is he waiting for? These sentences are a warning to people who, when it is requested of them to discharge their obligations, respond that there is plenty of .time for fulfilling responsibilities

What day are you waiting for in order to make up for the past and discharge your duties that you remain idle [today] and put off your work until later, or get occupied in pursuing vain activities, or Allah forbid, you get absorbed in sin? For instance, during the period of poverty and want, man waits for the encumbrances of the period of poverty to be overcome and become rich and then discharge his duties. Despite that may be wealth and needlessness may have worse demands than poverty and lead you to disobedience, because man becomes defiant when he perceives himself .needless

كَلاّ اِنَّ الاِنْسَانَ لَيَطْغَى، * اَنْ رَآهُ اسْتَغْنَى

(Nay! Man is most surely inordinate, because he sees himself free from want."(١)"

Do you during the period of needlessness and wealth wait for the encumbrances that have been brought about by your money and wealth to be removed and for the period of poverty and want to arrive so as to

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١- Surat al-'Alaq ٩٦:۶-٧.

discharge your duties? Do you imagine that the loss of your wealth will reduce the encumbrances of your work and life and you can hence discharge your duties with ease? All too often, poverty results in forgetting goals and perfections and occupies all .your time that you forget about perfection and spirituality

When you are healthy you imagine that man remembers Allah more during the period of illness, despite that this has no universality; it is not always true that man gets busy with invocation of Allah, supplication and be taking to the Infallibles ('a) when he is sick. Sometimes, illness gets so predominant on man that it robs him of the vigor to .discharge acts of devotion

During the age of youth, you tell yourself to let the passion of youthful pride and mischief get quenched and then you will discharge the acts of devotion when old age

arrives, negligent of the fact that you will get besieged by the reduction of ability and strength and will not be able to fulfill your duties. Therefore, when do you intend to discharge your obligations? When your death arrives? Or, when the seditious ?imposter comes

The term 'dajjal (the seditious imposter)' denotes the liquid of a goldsmith and is applied to a very deceptive person too, in the same way that the appearance of a lying person is deceptively attractive and entices others to himself by his hypocrisy .and dissimulation

In the hadiths, 'dajjal' denotes wickedness and mischievousness. In any case, the

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:Prophet's (S) intention may be one of these two meanings below

.The person who will appear at the end of time and cause sedition and wickedness .۱

The intention may not be a particular person, but every deceitful and fraudulent .۲ person: people who deceive others by means of enhancing their appearances and who attract others to themselves by means of their hypocrisy and dissimulation are instances of the dajjal and people who cause deviations among the people by .presenting falsehood as right and right as falsehood

The dajjal causes truth and falsehood to get so intertwined [with each other] that separating one from the other is impossible. That is why the Prophet (S) emphasizes that until you can distinguish right from falsehood, make the most of the opportunity and act upon what is right and be bound to its demands and needs, lest a day arrives when you will be misled and the way of guidance is closed in front of you; this is the worst occurrence that awaits man, most deplorable and more bitter than everything .else is waiting for the Day of Resurrection

In this saying, the Noble Prophet (S) warns man about the dangers of the future and embodies them for him, and mentions this possibility that it is likely for the problems of the future to be more than those of today; it is therefore fair for man to make the

.most of his opportunities today, and not play for time

Lesson ۵: Castigating the Acquisition of Knowledge for Worldly Goals

The Consequences Of Not Acting Upon Knowledge And Attaining Social Rank By Means Of It

(In this section the Prophet (S

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has addressed the scholars; His Holiness urges the scholars to conform their actions to their knowledge and reminds them about the ill-effects of not conforming conduct .to knowledge

Even if His Holiness' statements are clear and need no expounding, but for the sake of making this issue more transparent so as to make it clearer in the hearts, we will hint at some of the hadiths whose purport is the same as that of the Noble Prophet's (S) statements. But before that we shall be reminded that from the Islamic point of view a rational man cannot be without responsibilities, but the standards and limitations of obligations differ. Therefore, an ignorant man and a scholar equally have responsibilities, even though the burdens of a scholar are more than those of an .ignorant man

Therefore, for the reason that the ignorant man has obligations too, he is obliged to learn the divine duties and religious issues of his needs and not knowing religious issues does not result in man being divested of religious duties, that is why Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

On the Day of Resurrection, when Allah's slave who did not fulfill his duties [in the" world] is called for questioning, Allah, the Exalted, will ask him, 'Were you aware of your duties and obligations?' If in response he says, 'Yes, I was aware of my duties', Allah will say, 'Why did you not act upon that which you were aware of?' And if the slave says, 'I was an ignorant

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man', Allah will say, 'Why did you not go to learn your responsibilities so as to act upon them...'"(1)

The basic difference between a scholar and an ignorant man is that Allah's divine proof has fully been presented to him and no pretexts will be accepted for his not discharging his responsibilities, and he will [even] be dealt with in a more strict manner than the ignorant.

With regard to this, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"Seventy sins of an ignorant man will be forgiven before one sin of a scholar is forgiven..."(2)

It ought not to be imagined that quitting education is better in order not to be worse off than the ignorant, because one who fled from acquiring knowledge and awareness will be asked too [why they did so] and responsibility will not be divested of him because of his taking flight from education. In addition to that, why ought we not to be among those scholars who act upon their knowledge and will get envied in the hereafter in the same way that other people used to envy them in the world?

In our sources of hadith, a great deal of sections with different titles have been recorded with regard to the virtue of acquiring knowledge, to the extent that it has been recorded in some of the hadiths that even the birds of the air and the fish of the sea and the animals of the wilderness all seek Allah's forgiveness for a person who is seeking divine knowledge.

For

1- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷, p. ۲۸۵.

2- Ibid., vol. ۲, p. ۲۷.

every reason His Holiness' sates in this section that a scholar whose actions are not in accord with his knowledge will be in the worst position and rank on the Day of

Resurrection and will not smell the sweet scent of paradise. All too often [it occurs that] a person who embarks upon acquisition of knowledge initially does so with the intention of serving the religion and discharging his obligations but encumbrances crop up along the way; However, some people do not have a divine intention and objective from the beginning.

Not only do they lack sincerity, but have ill-intentions as well, like acquiring knowledge for the sake of attracting other people's attention and respect and acquiring social rank and popularity. It is natural that right from the beginning such an individual is heading towards deviation and collapse and consequently gets entangled in the filth of meanness and misery and will not smell the scent of paradise on the Day of Resurrection.

It is likely that a person who goes to learn secular knowledge for the sake of attaining position, opportunity and the acquisition of daily bread does not get reproached and blamed, but a person who learns divine sciences, which have been designed for the prosperity of the hereafter, for the sake of attaining the world deserves to be castigated. In reality, such an individual believes that the position and status of the world is higher than that of the hereafter. In other words, he has believed in the

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primacy of the world and not that of religion. This thought is a result of lack of faith in the basic principles and values of religion and has no end save being driven away from Allah, as the Prophet states:

"A person whose knowledge and awareness have been increased but [he] has not become detached from the world has in fact got very far from Allah."(۱)

The Consequences Of Acquiring Knowledge For The Sake Of Deceiving Others

"O Abu Dharr! A person who acquires knowledge for the sake of deceiving people will not smell the sweet scent of paradise."

Some people not only embark upon acquiring knowledge for the sake of attaining

fame and position but worse than that, they get education in order to deceive and .mislead people

Up to this section of the hadith, mention has been made about the importance of harmonizing our actions in accord with our knowledge and purifying the intention: that man ought to conceive of what intention he has when he embarks upon the acquisition of knowledge and should not let evil intentions appear in his heart. He ought not to set out gathering knowledge for the sake of titles such as 'Hujjat al-Islam', 'Ayatullah', 'Philosopher' [filsuf] and 'Interpreter of the Qur'an' [mufassir] and .[attracting the people's respect [and attention

Maybe people who take the trouble of getting education for the sake of attaining fame imagine that every person who is more popular among the people is more beloved by Allah too. This illusion is vain and void. Has every one who is popular among the people

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.Ibid., p. ۳۷ -۱

discharged his responsibilities in order for him to be beloved by Allah and [thus] attain prosperity? Even if he is very popular among the people, he is still the most ashamed and disgraced of all people in the sight of Allah because the criteria of man's works are knowledge, action and piety. The standard of judgment is that man ought to be .beloved by Allah, not by the people

Admitting Ignorance is a Quality of the Divine Scholars

:In a hadith, the Prophet (S) states

Every person who learns divine knowledge, which is supposed to be learnt only for" [the good pleasure of] Allah, for attaining worldly goals and position will not smell the (sweet scent of paradise on the Day of Resurrection."(۱

O Abu Dharr! Whenever they ask you about something which you do not know, say"

that you do not know so as to remain safe and do not pronounce an edict over what you have no knowledge of in order to escape Allah's wrath on the Day of Resurrection. (It is not permissible for man to say that of which he has no knowledge, ".(all too often, that word becomes a cause of deviation

One of the greatest misfortunes which a scholarly man may be afflicted by is feeling ashamed to admit his ignorance when he does not know something. This confession is very easy for an ignorant man, but man evades saying "I do not know" when he is known as an academic. When they ask him something that he does not know, it is hard for him

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.Ibid., p. ۳۸ -۱

to let the question go unanswered because he fears lest the people speculate about the authenticity of his scholarly credentials if he does not know the answer to .questions

What wrong is there with saying that I do not know in response to the people's questions? Has it been made incumbent upon the people to know everything? Only Allah knows everything and the others have only used a drop of His knowledge, as :has been stated in the Qur'an

... وَمَا أُوتِيتُم مِن الْعِلْمِ الاَّ قَليلاً

(and you are not given out of knowledge but a little."(۱ ..."

The late 'Allamah Tabataba'i, may Allah be pleased with him, used to hold class sessions on Thursday and Friday nights which were attended by a number of his students and philosophical and non-philosophical discussions were held. If we had any questions to ask, we used to present them before the class session or along the way [when going back home after class]. One night along the way I asked him a philosophical question. He answered, "I do not know." I asked a second question, to

which he easily replied that he did not know, then after a moment's reflection, said, "Can a response be presented in this form?" Then, he propounded an agreeable and satisfying answer. That night, he stated, "We ought to compare the things unknown to us with the things known to Allah. It is in that case that we will perceive that we do not know anything and the things unknown

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.Surat al-Isra' (or Bani Isra'il) ۱۷:۸۵ -۱

".to us are like the known to Allah, endless

This is the way of those who have been trained in the school of thought of the Prophets ('a) and the saints [awliya'] of Allah, that if they were not certain about anything, they gave a doubtful response. All too often, the answers he used to give us were more convincing than the ones we had, but if he was not certain and fully convinced, he was bound to initially say, "I do not know." In reality, this way had been .attained as a result of fighting against the carnal soul and subduing it

This is the method of people who have spent sixty or seventy years of their blessed lives along the course of purification of the soul, teaching and learning. In any case, after we have learnt [only] a few words and expressions, it is hard for us to say that we do not know when we return to our cities. We ought to practice and accustom ourselves to easily admitting ignorance when we do not know something, and if we have doubts, to say that what we are offering is a possible response. In this case, we .will have freed ourselves from the troubles of the hereafter

Man's Biggest Regret On The Day Of Resurrection

O Abu Dharr! A group of the dwellers of heaven will glance [down] upon the inmates" of the fire and ask them, 'What made you enter hell? Despite that we entered heaven '.as a result of your teaching and training us

In response, they will say, ‘We enjoined others to perform good works but we ourselves did not do what we advised others to do.’”

One of the scenes which has been described in the Qur’an is that the dwellers of heaven are at a higher level above the inmates of the infernal hell fire and see them and talk to them, as if paradise is situated at an elevated place and hell is positioned at a low place, and that is why the dwellers of the Garden are at a higher level.

The Qur’an’s expression is that sometimes the dwellers of heaven address the dwellers of hell and sometimes the dwellers of hell address the dwellers of paradise:

وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّهِ أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ أَنْ قَدْ وَجَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا رَبُّنَا حَقًّا فَهَلْ وَجَدْتُمْ مَا وَعَدَ رَبُّكُمْ حَقًّا قَالُوا نَعَمْ فَأَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ بَيْنَهُمْ أَن لَعْنَهُ اللهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ

“And the dwellers of the garden will call out to the inmates of the fire, ‘Surely we have found what our Lord promised us to be true; have you found what your Lord promised to be true?’ They will say, ‘Yes.’ Then a crier will cry out among them that the curse of Allah is on the unjust.”(۱)

Yes, as has been recorded in the hadith, the dwellers of hell will address a group of the inmates of the Fire saying, “We attained paradise thanks to the guidance, teaching and training which you gave us, what happened to you that you got caught up in Allah’s retribution?”

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۱- Surat al-A‘raf ۷:۴۴.

They will respond with regret and remorse, saying, “We did not discharge what we enjoined others to do, we invited you to perform good works but we ourselves did not do what we said. We advised you to fulfill the recommendable works, but we ourselves did not execute them. We guided you away from sin and gossip, but we ourselves got contaminated by sin and gossip. You listened to our words and executed them and earned a place in that lofty abode, but we got entangled in this

".miserable and painful fate in spite of all our knowledge

This remorse and contrition is the destiny of people who did not discharge their obligations. This regret is certainly more painful than burning in divine retribution, because spiritual torture is more painful than physical torture. The pain of rejoicing at .an enemy's failure is more than that of physical torture and burning

It is painful for man to feel that others found their way to the garden of bliss as a result of his guidance and he got into the predicament of hell despite the fact that he could have attained higher heights by means of his knowledge, and his disciples sit [in heaven] watching him. They are enjoying the pleasures and comforts of the Garden and he is being tormented in the Fire. If he did not have any torment, besides being deprived of the blessings that are at the disposal of his followers, this would be .enough for him

With due attention

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to the points which have been mentioned in this noble hadith, we have to initially correct our intention and embark upon the acquisition of knowledge for [the good pleasure of] Allah and discharging our responsibilities and execute what we say right from the outset so as to make this habit firm in ourselves and be able to discharge our duties as we acquire more information. If at the outset we build the foundation upon laziness and heedlessness, we initially quit discharging a work and later on another duty until the habit of disobedience gets strengthened in us and fighting against the .carnal soul is going to be hard later on

(The Categories Of Scholars In The Words Of 'Ali ('a

"Scholars are of two kinds; the first kind is the scholar whose actions match his .knowledge and he becomes prosperous

"The second type is the academic whose works do not correspond with his knowledge and he falls into perdition and without doubt the dwellers of hell will be bothered by

the bad smell of a scholar without good deeds. Verily, the most regretful and remorseful of the people of hell is the person who calls another one towards Allah and the other one accepts the invitation and obeys Allah and thereafter Allah makes him enter paradise, while the caller [himself] is taken to the eternal Fire because of not (doing what he said [acting upon his knowledge]."(1)

In an inspired hadith, Allah addresses Prophet David ('a):

"The least punishment which I inflict on a scholar without works (good deeds) is harder than seventy

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1- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 34.

punishments or requitals, and that is getting the sweetness of supplication away from him (and after that he does not derive pleasure from remembrance of me)..."(1)

Lesson 6: The Magnificence and Magnitude of the Rights of Allah's Blessings and the Need for Attention to Obligations

The Greatness Of The Rights Of Allah And The Infiniteness Of His Blessings

"O Abu Dharr! Allah's rights are higher than people could manage to discharge and his gifts are more than can be counted by His slaves, but you ought to acknowledge your faults every morning and every evening when you offer repentance."

In this section, the discussion pivots on bringing a sense of responsibility and performing duties. After man has understood that he ought to make use of his life, and knew that for the purpose of deriving optimum benefit from his life, time, and leisure, he ought to be knowledgeable; the turn comes for inducing a sense of motivation and activity in an individual and understanding how this motivation arises in man. In order to bring about ambition, it is necessary to pay attention to this point that Allah has rights upon His slaves and for this reason man finds himself obligated to Allah. Man conceives with his intellect and natural disposition that if someone had a

right on him, he ought to honor that right and every intelligent man knows that Allah, .the Exalted, has the highest right upon him

Once man has realized that all the gifts which he enjoys, ranging from the origin of existence and life to the rest of the gifts, material and spiritual, are all from Allah, the Exalted, it is not possible for him to forget his

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.Ibid., p. ۳۲ -۱

devotional duties. He knows that he ought to be thankful and appreciative to the Provider of these graces and this in itself is an incentive which drives a believer to action. That is the reason why in the first sentence of this section of the hadith the Prophet (S) hints at the rights of Allah on mankind and states that man can never ever .manage to thank Allah and discharge divine rights fully

Once man has understood that by expending all his life, he still remains unsuccessful at performing divine rights and thanking Allah for His blessings, he always ought to perceive himself as indebted, even if he has not committed any sin, divine rights are incumbent upon him and he ought to fulfill them, lest the devil deceive him into imagining that he has a claim on Allah. If man, with the grace of Allah, were successful at fulfilling his obligations, he ought not pride himself and boastfully thank Allah that he does not commit sin! He gets afflicted by heedlessness and self-admiration. Therefore, it has to be known that man cannot manage to discharge Allah's rights and :thank Him for His graces, as Allah states

وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللهِ لاَ تُحْصُوهَا...

And if you would count the blessings of Allah's favors, you will not be able to number" (them..."(۱

Supposing that man were able to count Allah's favors, he would still not be able to discharge the right of any one of them. Even if he were to content himself

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.Surat al-Nahl ۱۶:۱۷ -۱

with saying one ‘Praise be to Allah’, he still has not discharged the right of thanking Allah for it because just saying ‘Praise be to Allah’ is a grace and favor that Allah has granted unto him, and itself stands in need of thanksgiving. Therefore, for every thanksgiving, there is [yet] another incumbent thanksgiving. That is to say, if we were to [repeatedly] say ‘Thanks be to Allah’ up to the Day of Resurrection, we still would not have discharged the right of one ‘Praise be to Allah’, therefore, how can we be ?able to fulfill the rights of all these graces which creatures are not able to count

Attention to this point that the graces of Allah are uncountable and He has a lot of rights upon man inspires a feeling of modesty and humility in man who still feels .indebted to Allah even if he has not perpetrated any sin

Therefore, if man cannot fulfill all the thanksgiving for Allah’s graces and discharge His rights, the greatest work he can do is to preserve the condition of repentance and quitting the small sins, humble submissiveness to Allah and acknowledging sin and dereliction of duty. This in itself withholds man from pride and delusion, because when man gets deviated from the correct path, he gets stricken by materialism, complacency and self-indulgence, and when he gets guided to the correct path and performance of duties for the first time, he gets afflicted by pride and egotism. He compares himself with

the others and tells himself that people do not know the value of Allah’s favors and are contaminated by sin, but we have been successful at discharging [divine] duties !and appreciating blessings

Therefore, despite that we ought to be responsible and practical people with regard to our duties, we ought not to be stricken by pride; this is the greatest lesson of .(edification of character that can be deduced from the words of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a

In this same section, the Noble Prophet (S) besides encouraging work and effort and discharging of abilities and perceiving the importance of the rights of Allah, he warns .against being afflicted by pride and self-admiration

The Shortness Of Life And The Immortality Of Good And Bad Works

point

O Abu Dharr! In the passing of the day and night, you have a life that is always" heading towards diminution, and your works remain preserved and suddenly death arrives and in that case every person who performs good works will reap good results and every person who does a bad work will harvest regret and every farmer reaps ".what he sows

One point which impels man to work and make effort and brings to appearance the incentive to be active and perform duties is attention to this point that life is in the process of being spent. Whether we like it or not, our life gets decreased with every breath we take and we cannot manage to bring the wheel of time to a halt and seconds cannot be turned back and in the words of 'Ali ibn

:(Abi Talib ('a

(Every breath man takes is a step towards death."(۱"

We ought to be careful not to lose this capital freely, a capital that is always decreasing and wearing out, until death arrives and there is no running away from it, :as Imam 'Ali ('a) states

A person who fears death does not escape it and he who loves to stay alive ... " (forever will not live forever."(۲

The only way of preventing the loss of life is a profitable transaction and what better transaction than that man should build his heaven by means of his life, because that is :the only capital which can purchase the value of life, as Imam 'Ali ('a) states

Is there no free man who can leave this chewed morsel (of the world) to those who" like it? Certainly, the only price for yourselves is paradise. Therefore, do not sell (yourself except for paradise."(٣

Therefore, what losers are people who bargain their great [and] priceless asset of life with the fire of Allah's wrath! Perhaps those who expend their lives in pursuing vanity imagine that with the passage of life, their works also vanish. What void imagination! Even if this inebriety is a transitory and passing intoxication, and [it is] the inebriety of the Day of Resurrection which is everlasting; but still man's works remain conserved because works have a connection with man's soul and Allah, the Exalted. Even though we live in an inebriety which is heading towards diminution, but still we have a relationship with the

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ١١١٧, wisdom [hikmat] ٧١, trans. Fayd al-Islam -١
.Ibid., p. ١٢٢, sermon [khutbah] ٣٨ -٢
.Nahj al-Balaghah, wisdom [hikmat] ۴۶۵ -٣

.eternal world and our works will be stored there

a) The embodiment of man's worldly works on the Day of Resurrection

One of the acknowledged principles in regard to the Day of Resurrection is the preservation and embodiment of deeds, which has been hinted at by Allah in the :Qur'an; amongst which is

وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ فَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا فِيهِ وَيَقُولُونَ يَا وَيْلَتَنَا مَالِ هَذَا الْكِتَابِ لَا يُغادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً اِلَّا أَحْصَاهَا وَوَجَدُوا ما عَمِلُوا حاضِرًا وَلَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا

And the Book shall be placed, then you will see the guilty fearing from what is in it," and they will say, 'Ah! Woe to us! What a book this is! It does not omit a small one nor a great one, but numbers them all;' and what they had done they shall find present (there; and your Lord does not deal unjustly with anyone."(١

:At another juncture it states

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ * يَرَهُ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

So he who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it. And he who has done an" atom's weight of evil shall see it."(2)

b) The Suddenness of Death is A Cause of Vigilance and Wakefulness

No man knows up to when he is going to remain alive and when his hour of death arrives, as the Qur'an states:

... وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ مَا ذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ...

And no one knows what he shall earn on the morrow; and no one knows in what ..." land he shall die..."(3)

One of Allah's graces is that no man knows the time of his death, because if we knew when our

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١- Surat al-Kahf ١٨:۴٩.
٢- Surat al-Zilzal ٩٩:٧-٨.
٣- Surat Luqman ٣١:٣۴.

hour of death arrives, we would get more afflicted by pride and egoism. Of course, knowing or not knowing the time of death makes no difference for those [people] who have high spiritual capacities and are always reflecting about discharging responsibilities.

It is possible for Allah to announce to them when their hour of death arrives, although it is far from wisdom for Allah to announce the hour of death to us for whom knowing the hour of death would result in more procrastination and [our] putting off duties. Divine wisdom necessitates that we always ought to be concerned that perhaps the hour of death will arrive [just] one moment later and it is in this instance that we can

.make better use of our lives

The Pre–Ordination Of Man’s Sustenance And Its Inaccessibility To Others

O Abu Dharr! The position of one who does not hurry will not be taken away by“ another man and the covetous greedy person will not attain what has not been ”.ordained for him

Man is confronted by two great calamities in life; the first is that life compels him to pursue his needs and wants, as a result of which he is stopped from fulfilling his duties, and the second is that when he succeeds at discharging divine duties, he gets afflicted by pride and self-admiration which is a fire that exterminates (good) works. A .way of preventing these calamities has to be thought out

Some people imagine that discharging their obligations impedes on their lives. They imagine that getting busy with the world is

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a need which cannot be avoided and this in itself is a hurdle for performing divine and religious responsibilities; these excuses and pretexts are the devil’s temptations. What eliminates these temptations is attention to this point that Allah, the Exalted, has predestined a determined subsistence for every person and no matter how hard .man strives, he will not attain more than what has been ordained for him

One of the doctrines which has been mentioned in the Book and the Prophet’s (S) sayings and paying attention to it is incumbent upon man is the issue of the pre-ordination of sustenance and we currently intend to explicate the notion of the pre-ordination of sustenance and that man is not responsible for his subsistence, whether he strives or not. We will briefly mention that in religious sciences, importance has .been accorded to this issue

In a lot of instances in “Nahj al-Balaghah” mention has been made of the subject of the pre-ordination of sustenance. It has been mentioned in this very hadith that if man is lazy at acquiring his sustenance, another person consumes his subsistence

and if a person has a lot of greed at collecting possessions and strives very hard to acquire a greater share for himself, he will not attain what has not been ordained. .Therefore, attention to this point forestalls the devil's temptations

When the devil intends to stop man from discharging his divine duties and seduces him to currently be pursuing bread and water (daily sustenance), he ought

to hit the devil's mouth and say, "Keep quiet! My sustenance is preordained and will not be allotted to someone else." Of course, this belief is attained when man has .perfect certitude about the preordination of sustenance by Allah, the Exalted

What has been said about Allah, pre-ordaining the sustenance of individuals, does not imply that man ought to stop striving for his daily sustenance and say that Allah will grant him his sustenance. It has been discussed in its proper place that man ought to .strive to alleviate his needs and Allah is disgusted by lazy and self-indulgent people

The discourse about the preordination of sustenance is for people who get seduced by the deceptions and temptations of the devil, they imagine that if they strive to discharge divine duties, they along with their wives and children will die of hunger. Allah is greater than that he should leave hungry a person who is trudging the course .of devotion

The Unity Of Divine Actions And The Source Of Allah's Beneficence

The Unity Of Divine Actions [Tawhid-i Af'ali] And The Source Of Allah's Beneficence

Every person who attains good has been granted it by Allah and every person who" ".remains safe from harm has been protected by Allah

Another point worth mentioning is that once we get successful at discharging divine duties, performing acts of worship and fleeing from sins, we ought not to imagine that we are very worthy people because Allah is the origin of every good work which is performed by us. It is He who grants us the favor to

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.perform good works and to keep aloof from sin

Whatever worldly good naturally comes to us with or without effort is from Allah and also it is Allah who wards calamities off. The root of this conviction and perception manifests itself in belief in the unity of divine actions [tawhid-i af'ali] that man ought to perceive all good and good works as coming from Allah and also know Him as the .Repellant of vices and evil

The discussion about the unity of divine actions enjoys great importance and it can be said that all the issues about divine decree and pre-destination [qada wa qadar] and the like have been said themselves to be prerequisites for man's belief in the unity of .divine actions

The benefit of paying due attention to the unity of divine actions is that pride, self-admiration and egotism get erased from the inside of man and in reality attention to the unity of divine actions is a cure for a lot of ethical vices; amongst them laziness, indolence, jealousy and a feeling of inferiority. With attention to the unity of divine actions, no ground remains for jealousy and no ground remains for either pride or .lowliness. When man sees himself in connection with Allah, he does not feel inferior

Likewise, a person who perceives Allah's greatness does not feel egoistic because he believes everything as coming from Allah. Likewise, if man were to believe that all powers come from Allah and man cannot advance in his work save with

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Allah's permission, he does not fear any one. Once he has believed that Allah is the Source of all good and no one attains good without His permission, he no longer puts .his hope in other than Allah and only trusts in Allah

Lesson ۷: The Vigilance and Alertness of a Believer

Companionship with the Pious and Religious Scholars, and the Difference of Sin in the Perception of a Believer and an Infidel

O Abu Dharr! The pious are honorable and the religious scholars are the guides." Companionship with them results in the increase of knowledge and virtue. A believer perceives his sin as a frightful cliff which he fears will come down crumbling upon him while the infidel conceives his sin as a fly which passes across his nose."

In the previous statements, the Prophet (S) has informed man about his sensitive circumstances, the value of his life and the importance of the moments of his life and has cautioned him against laziness, idleness and indifference and [counseled him] to consider the issues of life with a sense of responsibility. It has been emphasized that man ought to make use of opportunities and not put off today's work until tomorrow. Now the question arises as to what is the best way of utilizing our lives and what is the first step on the spiritual journey towards Allah?

Incontrovertibly, the first step towards appreciating life and spiritual way-faring is abstinence from sin, for the reason that man who is contaminated by sin cannot attain any success and the value of man's life lies in his not being tainted by sin.

For this reason sin, no matter how small it is,

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is a cause of destruction, even if man performs a lot of worship alongside it. A person who sins alongside his acts of worship is similar to a person who has a torn bag and no matter how much money he puts in it, it comes out falling through the hole. Or, he is like a person who harvests his produce and then afterwards sets it on fire!? Because sins are like fire that is tossed on our works.

Therefore, the first stride to take is to know sins and to avoid them and to repent once we commit transgressions and seek Allah's help and that of His saints [awliya'] so as to be successful at not being contaminated by sin.

The Need For Choosing A Worthy Friend And Perceiving Sin As Great

In the Prophet's (S) point of view, a man trudging the course towards perfection needs two things: one is a worthy friend and the other is conceiving sin as great and

keeping himself aloof from it. Perhaps the medium between these two implies that selecting a good friend is a prerequisite for perceiving sin as big and finally escaping from sin; and choosing a bad friend is a requisite for getting even more polluted by sin, because a good friend can be a source of a lot of graces and favors in the same way that a bad friend is a cause of a great deal of aberrations and deviations.

A good friend motivates man to conceive sin as great and to always consider himself as ashamed and remorseful

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in the sight of Allah. Similarly, an immoral friend perpetually encourages man to perceive transgression as small; to such an extent that he does not feel ashamed of any sin.

In this section, the Prophet (S) presents two criteria for selecting an associate:

۱. Having piety.

۲. Awareness of the divine permissible things and the forbidden ones, in other words, knowledge of the religion.

Companionship with an impious friend makes man perceive sin as light and as a result of which he earns eternal perdition and loss; as the Qur'an quotes some of the inmates of hell saying:

يَا وَيْلَتَىٰ لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ فُلَانًا خَلِيلًا * لَقَدْ أَضَلَّنِي عَنِ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَنِي وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِلْإِنْسَانِ خَذُولًا

"O woe is me! Would that I had not taken such a one for a friend! Certainly he led me astray from the reminder after it had come to me; and Satan fails to aid man."(۱)

In the same way that an impious friend is not worthy of making friendship with, no plans for friendship have to be made with an ignorant person. Even if he intends to perform a good deed, he falls into error and deviation as a result of ignorance.

Therefore, in the same way that awareness and piety are two wings for traversing

the course of spiritual perfection and growth along the path of right, they are also two good standards for selecting a companion. It is for this reason that in his recommendation to Abu Dharr, the Noble Prophet (S) presents piety and

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.Surat al-Furqan ٢٥:٢٨-٢٩ -١

religious scholarship as two criteria for choosing an associate. Of course, it is proper that these two qualities are combined in man, because man who intends to perform his duties without being aware of his religion gets deceived by the Devil and the .people, no matter how holy he might be

The Danger Of Unrestrained Scholars And Unwise And Foolish Ignorant People

:In a well-known hadith, the Prophet (S) states

Two groups broke my back; a religious scholar who is unrestrained in performing" (indecent deeds and a devoted worshiper who is ignorant and uninformed."(١

Imam Khomeini ('a) used to state that sanctimonious people succeed at discharging their devotional obligations but ignore their original duty, which is acquiring knowledge. They travel the course with those same aberrant inclinations of theirs and even insist and persist on it. The damage inflicted upon Islam by these people is more than the damage inflicted by libertine people. This category of people neither :succeeds at anything nor lets other people make progress, as Imam al-Sadiq states

A person who discharges his obligations without knowledge produces more" (corruption and aberration than what he corrects."(٢

Likewise, the unrestrained religious scholar who does not do as he says deceives people as they respect him because of his knowledge while they inflict blows on Islam as a result of impiety; blows which the ignorant can never succeed at inflicting. It is for this reason that wherever piety has been defined and praised, the idea has been righteousness which is accompanied by knowledge, or else if these two get separated

from each other, not only will

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٢, p. ١١١, hadith ٢٥ -١
.Ibid., vol. ١, p. ٢٠٨ -٢

it not be profitable but detrimental as well. Also, if religious expertise and knowledge have been praised, the purport has been religious expertise and knowledge accompanied by works, because the religious scholar who does not put his knowledge into practice is a robber.

:Allah, the Exalted, addresses Prophet David (ʻa) thus

O David! Do not place as an intermediary between you and I a religious scholar who" has fallen in love with the world, because he will prevent you from traversing the course of love of Me. Verily, they are robbers on the highway ambushing Allah-seeking slaves. The least punishment I inflict upon them is that I drive out of their hearts the sweetness of supplication of Me."(١)

A scholar without works is like a thief who robs a caravan in broad daylight. He knows better how to outwit people because he has knowledge. Such an academic is of no benefit to the religion; therefore, we ought to guard against being fed with deception. Therefore, piety and religious expertise will be effective and will result in the prosperity of the individual and society once they co-occur.

Companionship is permissible with people who, on the one hand, have strengthened their piety, bondage to Allah, servitude and obedience, and on the other hand, have succeeded at attaining religious expertise and sciences. Rapport with this kind of divine scholars adds to man's virtues and perfection.

Even if the faqih in technical terms denotes learned people who have the ability of inference of Islamic law and

.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ١, p. ۴۶ -١

inversion of the branches of the religion to the fundamental principles of religion, the faqih in the terminology of the Qur’an and hadiths means theologian; ranging from knowledge of the branches of religion, beliefs and ethics. But a scholar of beliefs and .ethics is more suitable for companionship

The Prophet (S) states that now that you have made the intention to undertake the journey and have selected a suitable friend for yourself, guard against being contaminated by iniquity in that once you get polluted by sin, your movement and .progression will be futile and your efforts and acts of worship will bear no fruit

Man does not pursue sin purposelessly; transgression necessarily has sweetness, attraction and gravitation by which man gets contaminated. Even if these attractions are imaginative and are temptations of the Devil and lack reality, but man still conceives in sin attraction and sweetness which he pursues. So, what ought man to ?do in order to have the grace of not being contaminated by sin and resisting it

The best way of abstaining from sin is to perceive its danger and harm; losses and dangers which go with this transient pleasure and also know the permanent mal-.effects of sin both in this world and the hereafter

The attribute of a believer is that he has a special perception in regard to sin and it is this very perceptiveness which prevents him from committing sin. For a believer sin is a big stone which is about to fall on his head. He

gets bothered once he commits sin and error. That perception has such an effect on the thought and contemplation that his conscience always instigates him against sin and he repents and seeks forgiveness when he perpetrates sin. He is like a person who sees a big stone on top of his head and is always worried that it will fall on his head. That is to say, the soul of this man is so pure and untainted that he shows a reaction against every sin and always engages in reproaching and reprimanding his

.soul to the extent that he loses his sleep and tranquility too

Conversely, an infidel and a person who has contaminated his innate disposition with evil does not feel troubled and sin in his perception is like a fly which passes in front of his nose. (The meaning of infidel is not only a person who denies the existence of Allah and the hereafter, but a person who denies one of the primary principles of religion is (.an infidel too

Besides the hadiths and Qur'anic verses, it is a psychological truth that repeating indecent actions divests them of their ugliness and as a result they manifest themselves as pleasurable and shame is no longer felt when committing them. Sin too is the same. If a particular sin is repeatedly committed, its villainy is removed from it .and the result of this is that no shame is felt when committing it

Right here a criterion can be presented

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and that is that every person who wants to know whether he is on the boundary of belief or of infidelity ought to observe how his reaction is with regard to sin. If he notices that sin is nothing for him and pays no heed to it, then he should know that he is trudging the course of disbelief because feeling regret at committing sin indicates a pure soul and heedlessness of sin points to an unbelieving soul. The exigency of faith is that if anger and passion overcome man, as a result of which he commits wrongdoing, he immediately gets sorry and remorseful for his actions. In the event that such kind of a condition is absent in us, we ought to be worried for ourselves that .we are trudging a dangerous course

Paying Heed To Sin And Conceiving It As Great Is A Result Of Allah's Grace And Favor

O Abu Dharr! Allah, the Exalted and Blessed, embodies His slave's sins in front of him" once He desires his good and makes sin heavy and unbearable for him and He erases ".sin from the memory of a slave whom He intends bad for

Allah, the Exalted, loves all human beings; if He did not love an individual He would not

have created him. But Allah has exclusive grace and favor for his slaves. If this section [of humanity] commits sin, he embodies sin in their view because the first step in the direction of drowning in corruption and submerging in sin is forgetting sin, losing sight of sin and its requital. With regard to [the point] that

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Allah has attention and favor for His special slaves and does not leave them alone, He conversely pays no heed to some of them and has left them alone. Every person can manage to asses for himself whether he is an object of Allah's mercy and grace or .not

If he has not forgotten his past sins, and sin is heavy and unbearable for him, he .ought to know that he is an object of Allah's mercy

It is clear that keeping the remembrance of sin is only practicable once it prevents the further perpetration of sin or otherwise if man remembers his wrongdoings but does not conceive them as unbearable on his shoulders, he has no qualms about .committing sin

Imam al-Sajjad ('a) in the Du'a' [he taught to one of his followers by the name] Abu :Hamzah al-Thumali states

I am the one whom You gave respite so as to give up committing sins and repent;" while I did not give up sins. You covered my sins but I did not feel ashamed and ".perpetrated sins again. I trespassed the limits so that You overlooked me

Therefore, once Allah intends good for any person, he always embodies sin for him, to the extent that he sees it as a heavy and unbearable load. When Allah has no favor for someone and intends bad for him, he leaves him alone and thereafter sin looks light .and unimportant to him

Of course, in the beginning Allah does not drive anyone away from

p: ٨۴

his mercy and does not intent bad for anyone, but after man has perpetrated ugly works and has stubbornly insisted upon committing sin, Allah makes him afflicted by such requital.

A person who is beloved by Allah is one who has succeeded at attaining the status of servitude and nearness to Allah and man who is low in the sight of Allah is one who is far from Allah and has forgotten him. Once he forgets Allah, Allah too forgets him:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللهَ فَأَنْساهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ...

"And be not like those who forsook Allah, so He made them forsake their own souls..."(1)

The Need For Paying Heed To The Greatness Of The One Who Is Being Disobeyed Not The Smallness Of Sin

"O Abu Dharr! Do not look at the smallness of sin, but look at the greatness of the One you are disobeying."

Sin can be looked at from three points of view:

1. Looking at the essence of sin, as regards its greatness and smallness.

2. Looking at sin in respect of the doer [or agent] of the sin.

3. Looking at sin with reference to the One who is being disobeyed.

In the Book and Sunnah, sins have been divided into two sections, every one of which has a different injunction and a separate punishment. The Qur'an states that once the list of works is given to some of the people, they will say:

... يا وَيْلَتَنا مَالِ هَذَا الْكِتَابِ لَا يُغادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً اِلَّا أَحْصَاهَا...

"...Ah! Woe to us! What a book this is! It does not omit a small one nor a great one, but numbers them all..."(2)

Perhaps, the difference

۱- ۵۹:۱۹ Surat al-Hashr.
۲- ۱۸:۴۹ Surat al-Kahf.

between these two kinds is that promise of requital has been given for the greater sins while promise of punishment has not been given for the minor sins. Likewise, no limits have been placed over the small sins and a specific limit has been placed over the greater sins.

It is worth saying that it is possible for a person to commit an action which seems to him a small sin and [hence] forgivable, but be heedless of this fact that firstly repeating small sins is itself a great sin and persistence at it makes man an insolent perpetrator of sin. Secondly, he forgets Who is being sinned against and Whose bounds he is trespassing.

This section of the hadith hints at the second point of not just looking at the smallness of sin, but at Who is being disobeyed. Sometimes, one issue is in itself small but is [considered] great because it is connected with a great man.

Imagine that you are in the presence of an Infallible Imam ('a) and His Holiness orders you to do something, no matter how small: for instance, he orders you to bring him a blue plate, but you imagine that this order is very small and refrain from carrying it out because of this very reason. Is such an imagination logical? Is this the exigency of proper conduct? Is this disobedience acceptable?

It certainly is not so, because in spite of the smallness of the order, the commander is very great and

the small order acquires greatness because of the one who orders. Now, apply this same example on the Divine Essence, despite that disobedience of Allah is not comparable to the disobedience of an Infallible Imam. Therefore, the criterion for the

.ugliness of sin has to be the greatness of the Commander and the forbidder

Such a perception of sin can bring about a strong incentive in the direction of opposing the Devil and remove every kind of excuse-seeking from his carnal soul. Sometimes, a friend asks for a favor from someone within the limits of humanity, it is possible to reject his request and say that you do not have any right to give me orders. But sometimes father, mother and/or teacher give orders disobeying of which is very ugly and sometimes the order is made by a religious jurisprudent and sometimes by an Infallible Imam and sometimes by Allah himself. In this instance, the higher the level of the commander or forbidder, the uglier the disobedience and the more worthy of .remonstration it will be

When the Devil entices you that one look at a strange woman is nothing, one minute of listening to prohibited music is nothing, you ought to pay attention to Who you are disobeying. It is for this reason that the Prophet (S) states to Abu Dharr that do not look at the smallness of sin but look at the greatness of the One who is being .disobeyed

O Abu Dharr! The anxiety and worry of“

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a man with faith with regard to his sin is more than the fear of a sparrow which has ”.been trapped in a net

Here, the Prophet (S) states another example of the reaction of a believer with regard to his sin, that if they set a trap to catch a sparrow and this very active and mobile creature gets trapped, it reacts forcefully and never becomes tranquil and calm but tries to free itself from the trap and sometimes its striving results in its death and perdition; it hits itself on the sides so much that it dies in the end. This is a result of its anxiety and worry for falling into the trap. The reaction of a believer with regard to his sin is like this too. When he feels that he has fallen into the Devil's trap, anxiety and worry encompasses his entire being, to the extent that he loses his peace and .tranquility and he always tries to free himself from the Devil's trap

We are not infallible and are always on the verge of error and sin, and there is not expectation either that we will not sin. It is likely that sometimes we fall in the Devil's trap (of course the meaning of being fallible is not that we must sin, because it is possible for people who are fallible not to sin, and the difference between them is that the Infallible has a natural disposition which prevents him from committing sin, ordinary people

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also can manage not to get afflicted by sin despite not having an infallible natural disposition.) In any case, if we get afflicted by sin, our faith necessitates that we always worry and make effort to repent, cry and return to Allah and free ourselves .from the consequences of sin

Lesson ۸: The Correspondence of Words with Actions and Guarding the Tongue

The Effects of the Correspondence and Lack of Correspondence of Words with Actions

O Abu Dharr! Every person whose words are in accordance with his actions has" received his of prosperity and every person whose works do not match with his ".actions has reprimanded himself on the Day of Recompense

The majority of people mention good works when they talk and emphasize the importance and value of those works and that they have to be discharged and that they have an effect on the perfection of man; but practically their words are not in accordance with their actions. There are very few people who match their words with .their actions

If we believe that the correspondence of words and actions is connected with the levels of faith, we will deduce that the people whose faith is more perfect are more truthful and their words correspond more with their actions; in reality, their conduct is .witness to their words

While elucidating the verse, "...these are they who are true to themselves and these are they who guard against evil,"(۱) 'Allamah Tabataba'i, may Allah be pleased with

him, states, “Honesty is an attribute which encompasses all the virtues existent in knowledge and works, because truthfulness is a

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.Surat al-Baqarah ٢:١٧٧ -١

disposition which accompanies all the ethical virtues, amongst them chastity, courage, wisdom and justice; because man cannot be separated from his belief, words and actions. Man’s honesty denotes that his belief, word and works match with .one another; that is to say, he acts according to what he believes in and says

The natural disposition of man has been formed with the inherency of acknowledging the truth and inward submission to it, even if he may pretend otherwise. Therefore, once he has acknowledged the truth and is honest in his confession, he says what he believes in and acts in accordance with his words, it is in this instance that his faith (becomes pure and his morals and works reach the stage of perfection.”(١

He used to state, “Allah has called some people excessively honest, because the ”.conduct of the truthful people is an example of their words

A person whose words are in accordance with his actions is honest too. But the excessively honest are at a higher level and this is said about a person who not only matches his words with his actions, but is in accordance with his actions too in all .instances

The Noble Prophet (S) states that a person whose actions are in accordance with his words has attained bliss. If such a person strives to harmonize his words and actions, he will attain the rank of the truthful. In contrast, man who does not do what he says is a hypocrite and liar, as the Qur’an

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.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ١, p. ۴٣ -١

calls the hypocrites who acknowledge the Prophet’s (S) mission by their tongues but

calls the hypocrites who acknowledge the Prophet's (S) mission by their tongues but
:do not believe it in their hearts liars

إِذَا جَاءَکَ الْمُنَافِقُونَ قَالُوا نَشْهَدُ إِنَّکَ لَرَسُولُ اللهِ وَاللهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّکَ لَرَسُولُهُ وَاللهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَكَاذِبُونَ

When the hypocrites come to you, they say, ‘We bear witness that you are most“ surely Allah’s Apostle; and Allah knows that you are most surely His Apostle; and Allah (bears witness that the hypocrites are surely liars’.”(١

:The untruthfulness of the words of the unbelievers is because

... يَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ مَا لَيْسَ فِی قُلُوبِهِمْ وَاللهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَكْتُمُونَ

They say with their mouths what is not in their hearts; and Allah best knows what is...“ (in their hearts.”(٢

The Prophet (S) states that a person who does not match his words with his actions only castigates himself because his words are indicative of the fact that he knows the truth and his obligations, denoting that proof has been made complete for him. It is natural that such an individual knows the truth and [even] recommends others to it, .but he is negligent in his own actions, he only has to castigate himself

This word of the Prophet (S) is directed at the preachers and sermonizers that they should be bound to their words and their actions ought to be a reflex of their beliefs .and words

Allah, the Exalted, castigates this section of people in the Glorious Qur’an when it :states

أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

What! Do you enjoin men to be“

.Surat al-Munafiqun ٦٣:١ -١

.Surat Al ‘Imran ٣:١٦٧ -٢

good and neglect your own souls while you read the Book, have you then no (sense?"(١)

Forgetting does not imply erasing from the memory, but denotes not practically) putting your words into action because it is likely that man remembers his words but (.does not put them into action

When he advises others compassionately and says do this work, and quit a certain work, how can he himself forget to discharge that act? Does his heart break more for the others than for himself? Does he love other people more than he loves himself? .Such a thing is not acceptable

:Imam 'Ali ('a) states

O creatures of Allah! Fear Allah! Fear Allah in regard to your own selves and those" (you love the most."(٢)

His Holiness' intention is that you [obviously] love yourselves more than the others, and if you love other people, it is for the reason that they are of service to you, they make the means of pleasure, ease and prosperity ready for you and you derive gratification from companionship, conversation and association with them, therefore you are the origin and you want others for yourself. Now how do you compassionately advise others while you forget and do not feel sorry for yourselves and do not put ?what you say into action

:Allah states

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لاَ تَفْعَلُونَ * كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لاَ تَفْعَلُونَ

O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do? It is most hateful to"

١- Surat Baqarah ٢:۴۴.

٢- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۴٩۴, sermon [khutbah] ١۵۶, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

(Allah that you should say that which you do not do."(۱)

The Role of Sin in Being Deprived of Subsistence

O Abu Dharr! All too often an individual gets deprived of the sustenance which has" ".been pre-ordained for him because of the sin which he commits

This is another explanation intended to draw man's attention to the bad effects which .go with sin in this world for man and the deprivations that result from sin

On the basis of the differences in [the levels of] knowledge, every person is spoken to in one tongue or another. If an individual has attained the station of love, it is said to him, "What kind of a lover are you who opposes your beloved?" A lover is one who always tries to find out what his beloved wants from him so as to fulfill it, and to discover what his beloved does not like so as to refrain from it, how possible is it for a lover to oppose his beloved who says do so and so and abstain from so and so. For those who have the love of Allah and His saints [awliya'], this is the best way of .stopping them from committing sin

It has to be brought to the attention of the lovers of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) that sin is detested by their beloved. The most abhorred works in the perception of the Imams ('a) is sin. Sin is like a rotten corpse and people who have perceiving eyes and a strong inward intuition conceive its foul smell at a

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۱- Surat al-Saff ۶۱:۲-۳.

long distance. Now, how can a lover of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), who wants to get close to ?them, contaminate himself with something which causes their disgust

If a person intends to go and see his friend, he gets rid of the bad smell of his mouth and body, and cleans and perfumes himself, so that his friend may not be bothered by him. Sin causes bad smell and contamination of our selves. If we love the Ahl al-Bayt

(‘a) and would like to have a connection with them, we ought to cleanse our souls of contaminations so that they may take pleasure in having relationship with us. Therefore, the way of preventing individuals who have attained love of Allah and the .Ahl al-bayt (‘a) from sinning is to incite their feelings of affection

It goes without saying that all those who discharge the obligatory acts of worship quit the forbidden actions, but based on the levels of their knowledge, this love differs [from one man to another]. Sometimes, this love reaches such an extent that man, along the way of union with the Beloved, overlooks everything, even the eternal :Garden of bliss

O my Lord! I can bear the fire of hell, but how can I bear being separated from" (you?"(۱

In "Munajat-i Muhibban" (lovers' litany), the ninth litany of the "Munajat-e Khamsa :'Asharah", we read

O my Lord! Is there anyone who has tasted the sweetness of Your love and chosen" "?other than You

If people have not attained that level of love

.Du'a' al-Kumayl -۱

of Allah and the Infallible Imams (‘a) enough to withhold them from committing sin, they have to be warned about the repercussions and consequences of sin. The tortures, being deprived of prosperity and paradise, the ominous effects of sin in the world and the hereafter have to be counted. That which motivates man to discharge his duties and to abstain from certain actions is fear and hope, fear of being driven .away from bliss and hope of attaining benefit

Therefore, the best and most practicable way of guiding man is drawing his attention to the ill consequences of sin in this world and the hereafter. This is the same method

which the Noble Prophet (S) has employed in this section, because some people perceive the Day of Resurrection as far, despite that in accordance with the Islamic point of view, the hereafter is near and at hand, as Allah states:

إِنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَهُ بَعِيدًا * وَنَرِيهَا قَرِيبًا

"Surely, they think it to be far off and we see it nigh."(1)

One of the worldly losses resulting from sin is being deprived of sustenance. Among the instances of sustenance are daily food and clothing.

It has been narrated in a lot of hadiths that Allah, the Exalted, has pre-ordained the sustenance of every living creature and this pre-destination is sometimes definite [or fixed] and sometimes conditional [or suspended]; that is to say, it gets increased or decreased as a result of our works. Some of the good works result in the increase of sustenance and

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١- Surat al-Ma'arij ٧٠:۶-٧.

some evil deeds result in the decrease of sustenance.

Once we know that this sustenance which we sometimes earn by our own efforts and sometimes reaches us freely from Allah will be taken away from us as a result of our committing sin, we would commit sin less frequently.

Sin in the Chain of Causes

Sin changes formulae and renders the physical causes ineffective. The Qur'an states to us that in addition to the apparent repercussions of wrongdoing, sin has other consequences too, whose connection with their causes is not discernable by the physical senses. The Qur'an states:

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِيمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِكُمْ...

And whatever affliction befalls you, it is on account of what your hands have" wrought..."(1)

In reality, in a world governed by the order of cause and effect, no phenomena can be considered as having no cause and on the other hand afflictions cannot be attributed to Allah who is the ultimate good; therefore, it is man who directs afflictions towards himself.

Elsewhere, the Qur'an states:

... فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

"Therefore, let those beware who go against His order lest a trial afflict them or... there befall them a painful chastisement."(2)

Therefore, the verses of the Qur'an clarify this truth that a great deal of ordeals and deprivations result from sin, in the same way that good works and piety cause the downpour of graces and blessings.

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَى آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَرَكَاتٍ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالأَرْضِ...

"And if the people of the towns had

۱- Surat al-Shawra ۴۲:۳۰.
۲- Surat al-Nur ۲۴:۶۳.

believed and guarded (against evil), We would certainly have opened up for them blessings from the heaven and the earth..."(1)

In some instances the relationship which exists between sin and the affliction resulting therefrom is more or less discernable, like sins which cause certain illnesses, but this relationship is not perceptible in all instances. Sometimes, certain consequences arising from wrongdoing are not perceivable to man, like when man prepares food and [unfortunately or fortunately] something dirty and contaminating

falls into it at the time of consumption, sustenance that was ready but is suddenly lost .by man

Now, extend this sustenance to other foods and things as well; because all the graces are sustenance. A house is sustenance, a car is sustenance, and everything else which man makes use of is sustenance. In many instances being deprived of them is a .result of committing sin

Sustenance ought to be extended to spiritual sustenance too, because whatever brings about the perfection of our souls is sustenance too. Knowledge and faith are .provisions as well; the favor of worship too is sustenance

Sometimes, committing sin causes man to be deprived of the opportunity to worship. It has been narrated in a hadith that it is likely that man is unsuccessful at waking up at night to fulfill the recommendable prayers as a result of sin, even if he makes himself ready and tries to wake up on time, but either he does not wake up from sleep altogether or indolence stops him from fulfilling that

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۱- Surat al-A'raf ۷:۹۶.

recommendable duty. Therefore, depriving man of the grace to worship is one of the .mal-effects of sin

For every reason paying attention to the bad effects of sin is one of the causes which can prevent man from committing sin: that he ought to think that sin makes his .economic endeavors ineffective and deprives him of sustenance

Because of the relationship which exists between sin and deprivations and afflictions, when some great ethical personalities got afflicted by affliction, they used to think about what sin they have committed to be afflicted by this ordeal. They narrate that one of the great ethical mentors in Tehran was passing in an alley when an animal [suddenly] scared him, he sat down [at once] and sunk deep into thought as to what

!sin he had committed so as to deserve the bother of the animal

Guarding the Tongue and Keeping Aloof from Vain Pursuits

O Abu Dharr! Abstain from whatever is not for your benefit and not to utter what has“ no reward for you and protect your tongue in the same way that you safeguard your ”.money

What has been mentioned in this section is complementary to the previous explanations about preventing an individual from sin. A person who wants to abstain from sin has to put limits on himself, as has been said that whoever is moving along a precipice ought to fear lest he falls into it. A person who wants to abstain from sin has .to keep aloof from its prerequisites, and quit some of the things that are permissible

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For instance, if one wants to abstain from looking at strange people, they ought to .avoid looking at some of their close relatives

If someone wants to stop listening to haram (forbidden) music, he ought to stop listening to halal (permissible) music first. If one wants to avoid being contaminated by lies and gossip, he ought to avoid conversations which are likely to include lies. Of course, it is difficult for man to abstain from all the permissible things which are likely to propel him towards sin, especially a person who is at the beginning of the journey, but people who intend to attain spiritual perfection of the soul have to trudge this .course, whether they like it or not

The Noble Prophet (S) advises Abu Dharr to abstain from vain activities, in the same way that the Qur’an believes prosperity and bliss as embedded in abstinence from :vain pursuits

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ * الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِی صَلاَتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ * وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ

Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers, and who keep“ aloof from what is vain.”(۱)

A person who wants to attain prosperity and bliss has to keep aloof from actions which have no benefit for him, even if those words are permissible, and utilize his time .doing profitable and fruitful work

The Noble Prophet's (S) other advice to Abu Dharr is that he ought to abstain from .words that are not beneficial to him

Man ought to be very sensitive with regard to his

.Surat al-Mu'minun ٢٣:١-٣ -١

tongue. One must try to abstain from uttering even permissible words because sometimes one word is uttered from one's mouth which results in bad worldly and heavenly effects. The reason why it has repeatedly been said in the hadiths to withhold your tongues and do not utter useless words is because sometimes man cannot manage to control his tongue and gets affected by lies, gossip and making fun of others and the rest of the diseases of the tongue. It is for this reason that some of .the great men preferred to stay as quiet as possible

The Noble Prophet (S) states that you ought to strive to guard your tongue in the same way that you make effort to safeguard money and gold coins. Look at the way you protect your money, you put it in a safe and close its door strongly and put it in a safe place, guard your tongue, whose value is more than that of money, in the same way too. Allah has provided you with barriers for your mouth, and for those barriers .He has provided teeth and lips which limit the tongue within those barriers

Therefore, try not to free it. Abstain from even permissible words because you expend your energy and strength in vain and in this same way you will be propelled towards sin and errors bit by bit until finally you will be pulled towards sin and forbidden actions [muharramat]. How much difference is there between talking about other people

and gossiping [ghaybah]? Talking about other people along with gossip is a great sin which is seventy times greater than committing fornication in the Ka'bah! This is not a .difference we can hope to reduce bit by bit once we get afflicted by it

Lesson ۹: The Value and Importance of Prayer and the Differences of Status of the Dwellers of Paradise

Subdividing Some of the Prophet's (S) Advices

point

The Prophet's (S) advices which have been the object of discussion can be divided into :three sections

First section

The first section was about waking man up from negligence because he is, on the basis of his animal nature, more motivated by worldly activities, satiating his sensual instincts and desires of the flesh. It is for this reason that he forgets the beginning [of .creation] and the Day of Resurrection

Even though some people are aware about the goal and ultimate aim of their creation, but still most of the people are heedless of the aim of their creation. They do not know the reason why they have been created and where they are going and what they ought to do. Therefore, they have to be awoken and the sense of responsibility incited in them. The first section of the prophet's (S) admonitions was in the direction of getting rid of negligence and making man pay heed to his responsibilities and that .the priceless asset of life is at his free disposal which he ought to derive benefit from

Section two

After man's being aware about the ultimate goal and the need to select the path which leads him to that aim, the incumbency of acquiring knowledge and gaining

awareness

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is brought to attention; it is for this reason that in the second section concentration has been placed on acquisition of knowledge and the responsibilities of the divine scholars. It has also been mentioned that the most necessary knowledge is awareness which imparts the ultimate goal of creation and conveys the means of .attaining it, which is called divine sciences

Third section

In this section the need for putting our knowledge to practicable usage in fulfilling our known responsibilities and duties has been mentioned, and it has been made known that works find fulfillment in two aspects: the first aspect is the positive and constructive activities, that is to say the activities that ought to be done. The second aspect is the negative activities, that is to say, the prohibited and the forbidden works which ought to be abstained from. The fundamental point in this section is the need to perceive the heavy price of sin and the effects of getting contaminated by it. After these three sections, the fourth section of the Prophet's (S) admonitions will be .discussed

Fourth section

Man ought not to content himself with discharging the obligatory duties and abstaining from the forbidden actions and imagine that he no longer has [any more] .duties

Even though attaining this position is important, but still this is just the first step for attaining his ultimate goal. It is axiomatic that man cannot manage to abstain from sins and perform the obligatory actions and in short, a person cannot take the next steps without

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taking the first step, but this [first] step, in comparison with the remaining steps, is a short distance already traversed, and man currently has a very long way to go. Therefore, man has to be encouraged to undertake effort and activity and awaken in him the motivation not to content himself with discharging the obligatory works and .quitting sins and the forbidden actions

The Station of Allah's Devotees and Nocturnal Worshipers

O Abu Dharr! Allah takes a group of people to paradise and then grants them so" much favor that they get tired of it, but when they look at the others residing in higher levels of paradise, they recognize them and say, 'O Lord! These are our brothers whom we used to live with in the world, why have you given them preference [over '?[us

It will be said in response, 'Far from it! Far from it! They were hungry when you were" full, and they were thirsty as a result of fasting when you were satiated, and they kept vigil at night performing acts of devoted worship while you slept, and they were ".'outside in the way of Allah while you were enjoying ease inside your houses

On these sentences the Prophet (S) has portrayed a scene of the hereafter, a scene where man has found his way to paradise as a result of discharging obligatory actions and abstaining from forbidden actions. There is no room for him to talk about hell and its perceptions, because he has been saved from the danger of the inferno and has become

p: ۱۰۳

a dweller of the Garden of eternal bliss, but he has been a man of myopic ambition who contented himself with the low levels of heaven and did not have the resolve to undertake higher steps and attain higher levels [of paradise]. Now, they portray to him that even if you attained heaven by means of your discharging obligatory duties and responsibilities but still there are other people who are higher than you and you .ought to try to attain their stations

Allah makes a lot of people enter heaven and grants them a great deal of graces, to

the extent that they get occupied with utilizing and deriving pleasure from those blessings but for a time. (The Prophet's (S) expression is that Allah grants so many blessings to them that they eventually get tired of them. Of course, this phrasing is common parlance, otherwise there is no tiredness in the Garden of eternal bliss, as the Qur'an states:

... لاَ يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَلاَ يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا لُغُوبٌ

"...toil shall not touch us therein, nor shall fatigue therein afflict us."(1)

Therefore, the Prophet's (S) intention is that they will be granted whatever they want.)

All at once these dwellers of the Garden look at their friends who have achieved higher stations, and get surprised. They make a humble petition, saying, "O Lord! These were our friends with whom we associated in the world, performed the prayers with in the same row and were of the same regiment during divine battles, why have you

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۱- Surat Fatir ۳۵:۳۵.

preferred them over us and granted them higher stations?"

They will be answered, "You and them have a great deal of differences, they were hungry when you were full; they were thirsty when you were satiated and they used to go hungry undertaking recommendable fasts. When you were occupied with reaping the benefits of blessings and permissible foods, they were fasting. Even if you have not committed any sin, still they used to keep their stomachs empty of food and drink in the hot summer. You used to content yourselves to you discharging obligatory duties and thereafter used to take a rest, but they never went to sleep and were busy with acts of devotion and performing secret prayers to Allah." In the Qur'an's statement, they were the people who:

كَانُوا قَلِيلاً مِن اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُون * وَبِالأَسْحَارِهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ

They used to sleep but a little in the night and in the morning they used to seek“ (forgiveness.”(۱)

The Differences in the Gratification Enjoyed by the Dwellers of the Different Stations of Paradise

In these statements the Prophet (S) reminds us about the different stations and ranks of paradise. It has been explicitly stated in a great deal of the verses of the Qur’an and the hadiths that in the same way that hell has levels, heaven too has ranks and stations. Its lowest level specially belongs to the people who performed their obligatory duties and the highest level of paradise is the station of contentment [maqam-i ridwan] which is reserved for the special saints [awliya’] and sincere .worshipers [mukhlisin] of Allah

:Allah states

وَعَدَ اللهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ

p: ۱۰۵

.Surat al-Dhariyat ۵۱:۱۷-۱۸ -۱

جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِى مَنْ تَحْتِهَا الاَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَمَسَاكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِى جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِن اللهِ أَكْبَرُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

Allah has promised to the believing men and the believing women gardens, beneath“ which rivers flow, to abide in them, and goodly dwellings in gardens of perpetual (abode, and best of all is Allah’s goodly pleasure, that is the grand achievement.”(۱)

With regard to the sentence ‘and the best of all is Allah’s goodly pleasure [ridwan]’, the late ‘Allamah Tabataba’i states, “Allah’s goodly pleasure [ridwan] is higher and better than all the blessings of the eternal garden and it is for this reason that the term ‘pleasure’ [ridwan] has been used to function as an indefinite or indeterminate noun [in this verse] because indefinite nouns have no limit whatsoever, or that no matter how little the pleasure of Allah, it still is greater than all blessings, not from the

perspective that all the blessings are derived from the pleasure of Allah—even if this is the truth—but from the perspective that the reality of servitude and devotional service of Allah to which the Qur'an calls [mankind] is servitude springing from love of Allah, not because of coveting the Garden of bliss and/or fear of hell. The highest prosperity and bliss for a lover is to win the pleasure of their Beloved, not striving to please and satiate himself."(۲)

Servitude out of love and affection for Allah, as has been narrated in some of the hadiths, is the highest form of devotion and

p: ۱۰۶

۱- Surat al-Tawbah (or Bara'ah) ۹:۷۲.

۲- Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. p. ۳۵۴.

is especially reserved for the free, liberal and righteous. It is for this reason that it can be claimed that the highest station of paradise is the station of contentment which is especially reserved for the righteous and liberal, who worship Allah with purity of intention.

In connection with the levels of the hereafter, Allah states:

أُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُم عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَلَلآخِرَةُ أَكْبَرُ دَرَجَاتٍ وَأَكْبَرُ تَفْضِيلاً

"See how We made some of them excel others, and certainly the hereafter is much superior in excellence."(۱)

This ayat makes it known that the differences in the levels of people depends upon their efforts and endeavors. It is not so that a person whose works are little will be the same with a person whose works are many. In addition to that, the levels and ranks of the hereafter are not comparable with different levels of the world, and have nothing to do with the use of facilities; because the hereafter is higher than can be imagined at all.

The criteria for superiority in the world are possession of property and wealth and

position and rank in the world, and there is no doubt that these are limited standards. But the criteria for superiority in the hereafter and the differences of its levels depends on the level of man's piety and purity of intention which are the states of the heart and soul of man and without doubt are not comparable with the differences of the world.

As has been pointed out, the Prophet's

١- ١٧:٢١ (or Bani Isra'il) Surat al-Isra'.

(S) statements in this section warn man that he ought not to content himself with fulfilling the obligatory actions and abstaining from the forbidden actions, of course a person who contents himself with the low levels of paradise can please himself with this very limit, but a day comes when he sees his friends and peers residing in higher stations and will regret on that day. In order for us to attain the higher levels, it is necessary to reduce our rest and ease and engage in worship more.

It is worth saying that rest to the necessary limit is desirable and sometimes incumbent and all too often the prerequisite for an obligatory duty is itself obligatory, like when one's lack of rest leads to tiredness and lack of vigor during prayer. Or, if he does not sleep on time, he does not understand his lessons. What has been castigated is unnecessary and too much rest, which if it does not lead to hell, at least it holds an individual behind the others.

The Prophet's (S) Intense Love for Prayer

In continuation of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) introduces prayer as the best and most praiseworthy work which an individual can occupy himself with during times of leisure:

"O Abu Dharr! The Glorious and Honorable Lord has made prayer the light of my eyes, and made it to me as beloved as food is to the hungry and water is to the thirsty. One who is hungry gets satisfied when one eats food, and one who is

p: ۱۰۸

".thirsty gets satiated with drinking water, but I never get contented with my prayers

It is better for a person who has decided to get advice from the Noble Prophet (S), and has chosen His Holiness (S) as his role model, to see how the spiritual wayfaring and conduct of the Noble Prophet (S) is. That is why at this stage the Noble Prophet (S) introduces himself as a practical role model and this is the best means of instruction .for people who love the Noble Prophet (S) and would like to traverse his course

,It has been narrated in a hadith

".I love from your world sweet scent and women, but prayer is the light of my eyes"

That the Noble Prophet (S) said that prayer is the light of my eyes is the best expression which man uses with regard to their most beloved one and say, "So and so ".is the light of my eyes

In the Qur'an Allah, the Exalted, has introduced Prophet Moses (S) as the light of his mother's eyes, where it states that, "O Moses we inspired your mother to put the infant in a box and throw it on the sea. Then, the waves of the sea took the newborn to the shores of the sea to My enemy and he got the baby from the sea and I of my own grace showered love upon thee (so that they must love you) and so that you may get built in front of My own eyes

p: ۱۰۹

".(and with My favor)

:In continuation, it states

إِذْ تَمْشِی أُخْتُک فَتَقُولُ هَلْ أَدُلُّکُمْ عَلَی مَنْ یَکْفُلُهُ فَرَجَعْنَاک إِلَی أُمِّک کَیْ تَقَرَّ عَیْنُهَا وَلاَ تَحْزَنَ...

When your sister went and said, 'Shall I direct you to one who will take charge of" him? So we brought you back to your mother, that her eye might be cooled and she (should not grieve..."(۱

The Noble Prophet (S) states that prayer is the light of his eyes and because we cannot perceive this point, we will engage in a sweet explanation of it so that it may be comprehensible to us. We need to eat and drink and if we go for hours on end without food, we get very hungry and the most desirable thing for us is food. And likewise, we get very thirsty when we go for hours on end without water and the most desirable thing for us is a drop of cold water.

The Prophet states that his love for prayer is like man's love for food and water when hungry and thirsty with this difference that a hungry man gets satiated after drinking water while I do not get contented with my prayers.

With this expression the value of prayer becomes clear and that if after performing the obligatory duties man finds an opportunity [of free time], prayer is the best recommendable work to get busy with, as was the conduct of the Prophet (S) and the Infallible Imams ('a) and for the purpose of making this clear, we

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١- Surat Ta Ha ٢٠:۴٠.

will cite a few hadiths:

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states "'Ali ('a) was such that whenever an unpleasant issue occurred, he used to perform the prayers and recite this ayat, "And seek assistance through patience and prayer, and most surely it is a hard thing except for the humble ones.(١)"(٢)

Imam al-Sajjad ('a) states:

"No calamity befell the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali ('a), save that he performed a thousand rakats of prayer, gave charity to sixty poor people and fasted for three days on that day."(٣)

It has [thus] been narrated in "Bihar al-Anwar" with regard to consistence and steadfastness in prayer:

The Prophet (S) stood for prayer for ten years until his legs got swollen and his face" (became pale..."(4)

O Abu Dharr! Every man who performs twelve additional rak'ats besides the" obligatory prayers has a determined right upon Allah that is a palace in the Garden of ".eternal bliss

Prayer is the Key to Prosperity and Bliss

O Abu Dharr! As long as you are engaged in prayer, you are knocking on the door of" the Omnipotent King and the door opens upon every person who knocks a lot on the ".door of the King

This is another expression for motivating man towards prayer. The Noble Prophet (S) states that a person who prays knocks on the door of Allah. A person who has an issue with Allah has to go to the doorstep of His house and prayer is similar to going to knock on Allah's door, and it is not possible for the door of Allah to remain closed to one

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.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۴۵ -۱
.Mustadrik al-Wasa'il, vol. ۲, p. ۴۸۱ -۲
.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۴۱, p. ۱۳۲ -۳
.Ibid., vol. ۱۰, p. ۴۰ -۴

.who goes to knock on it and insists upon his request

Therefore, if you would like to be the object of Allah's attention and for His door of mercy and acceptance to be opened, knock a lot on it and be steadfast in prayer. It is likely that the door will not get opened on the first and second knock because of man's being contaminated [with sin] or because of divine wisdom, but finally it gets .open

Beyond the shadow of doubt, the doors of Allah's mercy are always open for man

because it is not possible for Him to invite people, on the one hand, and close the doors of His mercy for them, on the other hand. The doors of Allah's mercy are only closed to those who deny His signs and the proud, who of course have closed the :doors of divine mercy for themselves

اِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا واسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لاَ تُفَتَّحُ وَلَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ...

Lo! They who deny Our revelations and scorn them, for them the gates of heaven will" (not be opened..."(١)

It is worthy of mention that what has been recorded in some ayats and hadiths that there are doors for the sky and/or what has been recorded in this hadith that as long as man is in a state of prayer, he is knocking on Allah's door is meant to serve as an intelligible and sensible comparison so that spiritual and metaphysical issues are perceivable and comprehensible to us. The truth is that there

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.Surat al-A'raf ٧:۴٠ -١

is no barrier and veil between Allah and His slave and it is man's evil deeds which serve as a barrier of his attention to Allah and in reality, man gets deprived of Allah's blessings because of his sin. The key which opens the door of Allah's mercy and takes away the barriers is devotion and servitude to Allah and prayer is the best form of .devotion

In continuation of the recommendation about the blessing which a devoted worshiper :enjoys, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Whenever a believing man stands in prayer, Allah's mercy completely" encompasses him up to the Throne, an angel will be assigned for him calling, 'O progeny of Adam! If you knew what gains you reap during prayer and with whom you ".'speak, you would never stop it

The Noble Prophet (S) states that a person who performs a lot of prayer is covered

with the blessings of Allah from the parting of the head to the Throne. It is natural that a person who is interested in station and opportunity lengthens their prayers. Most important of all, Allah appoints an angel that continually shouts to the sons of Adam if they knew with Whom they were having intimate talk and with whom they are conversing with, they would not stop their prayers and never feel tired of praying. Pay heed to before Whom you are standing and with Whom you are having correspondence, so that you may understand the importance of your prayer by

means of this awareness. If you knew what benefits, virtues and favors are granted by means of prayer, you would never give an end to it.

Perceiving the Sweetness of Prayer Is the Secret of Its Continuance

For the purpose of the continuity and steadfastness in prayer, what is important is for man to derive pleasure from worship and believe that he is gaining benefit; man quickly gets tired of activities which do not give him gratification. The sweetness of prayer causes man to become more interested in prayer and this satisfaction and enjoyment is not to be achieved save by quitting and abstaining from sin. Wrong-doing leads to the pleasure of worship being divested of man. It is for this reason that the supplication of some of the Infallibles ('a) was thus, "O Lord make us taste the sweetness of worship."

It sometimes happens that the best food is prepared for a sick person but because of his illness, he feels that the food has no taste and pleasure. Maybe, a soundly healthy man derives satisfaction from eating one piece of dry bread. Therefore, what is important is that the feeling of need and gratification ought to be enlivened in man.

In the previous sentences, it has been pointed out that the Prophet (S) stated that prayer was more desirably sweet to him than food is to a hungry man and water is to a thirsty man; because they get satisfied from eating and drinking but he does not get contented with prayer.

In regard to the sweetness of worship

for an enamored slave, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"... If you perceive the sweetness of devotion to Allah, look at the favors and light of worship and brighten your heart, you will not quit even for a moment, even if you are torn to pieces."(۱)

In another hadith, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"... I sought the sweetness of prayer and finally found it in the quitting of sins."(۲)

Lesson ۱۰: The Leaders of Heaven and the Status of Some of the Duties and the Levels of Paradise

The Leaders of Paradise

With regard to the leaders of paradise, the Noble Prophet (S) says:

"O Abu Dharr! Happy are those who are the standard-bearers on the Day of Resurrection, who hold the flag in front of people and precede them towards heaven, those are the same people who take precedence over others in going to the Mosques early in the morning and at other times [of the day]."

All human beings belonging to every age desire to take precedence over others. Of course, this competing and contesting is blameworthy if it is in connection to the world, but competition and taking precedence over others with regard to the hereafter is not only free of blame, but also a sign of man's growth and seeking prosperity. Because the prosperity of man depends on having intimacy with Allah and if the believers take precedence over the others in this regard, it is not out of ostentation but in order to attain bliss.

Emphasis has been laid on this issue in many instances in the Qur'an; in one of the instances Allah states:

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا

.Mustadrik al-Wasa'il, vol. ۱۱, p. ۲۵۳, section [bab] ۱۷ -۱
.Ibid., vol. ۱۳, p. ۱۷۳, section [bab] ۱۰۱ -۲

السَّمَوَاتُ وَالأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord; and a garden, the extensiveness of which" (is as the heavens and the earth, it is prepared for those who guard against evil."(۱

In reality, this ayat makes known the call of man's natural disposition because his .basic nature desires his perfection and wants him to be more perfect than the others

Natural Disposition and the Search for Perfection

Without doubt, man yearns for the ultimate perfection and that is in intimacy with Allah. It is for this reason that he makes use of every means and resources in order to attain it. But limited perfections are not man's ultimate object of desire because they lose their appeal to higher perfections, and secondly, man gets satiated after attaining his desires. It is for this reason that they have said that union [or attainment] is the grave of love, that is to say man cannot be a lover of limited beauty and .goodness but he naturally is a lover of immaculate perfection and yearns for Allah

Man's deepest desire is a divine want, and if the veils of error were removed from his eyes and he were able to perceive his Beloved, he would have intimate acts of .(devotion, like 'Ali ('a

:Allah states in the Qur'an

... أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

(surely by Allah's remembrance are hearts set at rest."(۲ ..."

The term 'remembrance of Allah' [bi-dhikr Allah] is a monopoly; that is to say it is only by Allah's remembrance that hearts are set at rest and

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.Surat Al 'Imran ۳:۱۳۳ -۱

.Surat al-Ra'd ۱۳:۲۸ -۲

it removes anxiety and worry away and man is terribly wrong if he imagines that property, wealth, position and status set his heart at rest. Of course, the Qur'an does not forbid attaining them, but it states that they do not set man's heart at rest.(۱)

It has been said that man yearns for ideal perfection and he makes use of every means and tools; one of the means of attaining spotless perfection is prayer as an intimate dialogue between an individual and his Lord and enlivening the mosques. The Prophet (S) states that happy are those who take precedence and leadership on the Day of Resurrection. They lead men towards the Garden of eternal bliss and the others fall behind them in order to find their way to paradise. They are people who used to go to the mosques before everyone early in the morning and at other times of the day.

In order to make this comprehensible to the mind, heed ought to be paid to this issue that one of the qualities of man's soul is that he gets motivated once he sees the others trudging the course of goodness and welfare. The axiom of yielding to patterns and looking up to role models has been accepted as an indisputable means of edification of personality. In truth, the model plays the most fundamental role in man's way of life.

If man takes precedence at performing good works, he attracts the attention of other people and as a result, the

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.Shahid Mutahhari, Insan-e Kamil (the Perfect Man), pp. ۹۴-۹۶ -۱

others too follow his lead. This matter (yielding to example) is an object of attention for youths. The older the people grow, the more they desire to be role models for

other human beings, and this feeling is manifested in their conduct and performance .of responsibilities. As a result, the others too get inspired to do good works

It is natural that when one man in a community begins to do something, the others easily follow his lead. For instance, in a religious school, the others get encouraged by the conduct of a number of people who take the lead at going to the noon [zuhr] prayers. But if some people do not take leadership, the others do not pay heed to the time of prayer and to being in the mosque and/or if they pay heed [at all], do not firmly decide to undertake fulfilling it. This is an expression of that same spiritual and .psychological truth which has been called yielding to role models

If man performs works secretly for the sake of not getting contaminated by sanctimony, his works are good and praiseworthy, but if a person openly performs a good work in order to encourage others, not only is his action free from blame, but very valuable and productive because he discharges his duties not with the intention .of showing off but of motivating others

:In this regard, Allah states

... وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلاَنِيَةً...

and spend benevolently out of what we have given them secretly…"

p: ١١٨

(and openly…"(١

Some people have said that the purpose of spending secretly in the way of Allah is for man to keep afar from hypocrisy and the purpose of spending openly is for inspiring others, therefore there is goodness in every aspect. The work of both the one who prays secretly for the purpose of keeping afar from sanctimony and that of one who prays openly in the mosque in order to encourage others is good. In addition to that, a person who takes the lead in going to the mosque with a sincere intention and far from hypocrisy and [his action] results in inspiring them, his reward is twice as much and he will be the standard-bearer on the Day of Resurrection because his action has

.opened the way to the mosque

The late Ayatullah Mar'ashi Najafi, may he reside in Allah's garden of eternal bliss, was bound to going to the Holy Shrine [of Qum] early in the morning before the call to prayer [adhan]. During the early days of our religious education, we sometimes used to succeed at going to the Shrine early in the morning. Sometimes, snow used to fall and with complete wonder we used to see the late Ayatullah Mar'ashi sitting behind the door with his cloak pulled over his head. This was one of his high and eminent qualities. How much does such conduct encourage others to do the same? When the religious students used to see a religious legal authority sitting behind

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.Surat al-Ra'd ۱۳:۲۲ -۱

the door of the mosque early in the morning, they used to get encouraged to be .present in the Shrine early in the morning

It is proper for us to cite two hadiths with regard to the importance of being present in the mosque because mention has been made about the importance of taking .precedence when going to the mosque

:The Noble Prophet (S) states

Verily, there are attendants for the mosques who are companions of the angels." When they do not attend the mosques on some excuse, they comfort them and visit (them when they get sick and help them whenever they have need."(۱

:In another hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states

Sitting in the mosque to wait for the time of prayer to arrive is worship. Also, they said" that Allah builds two houses in paradise for a person whose speech is the Qur'an and (whose house is the mosque."(۲

The Status and Rank of Some Duties

point

:In continuation of the hadith of Abu Dharr, the Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Prayer is the mainstay of religion and that which flows on the tongue in“ remembrance of Allah is more important. Charity erases sin and a word which is beneficial for the people is more significant than charity. Fasting extinguishes the fire and the fast of the tongue is more superb. And the jihad (spiritual struggle) is honor ”.and dignity and the jihad of the tongue is more eminent

a) The Status and Rank of Prayer

The Noble Prophet (S) states that prayer is the cornerstone of religion and that without it religion crumbles, but its invocations

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.Mustadrik al-Wasa'il, vol. ١, p. ٣٥٨ -١

.Ibid -٢

and words are more important and greater than the rest of the works because entreaties are a manifestation of the devotion and humility of a believing slave before .Allah and also with those implorations the immensity of His mercy is demonstrated

It is because of its delicate role in reforming the spiritual and religious personality of man that prayer has been set forth as the foundation and linchpin of religion. In reality, prayer embodies man's faith and grants perfection to his spiritual identity. It is for this reason that the verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths of the Infallibles have .been granted praiseworthy importance

:The Noble Prophet (S) states in a hadith

Prayer is the greatest obligatory duty after knowledge of Allah and is the first thing“ which will be asked of a slave on the Day of Resurrection. If it gets accepted, the rest of the works also get approved and if it does not get consented to, the rest of the

(works are disapproved."(1

:In connection with the status of sajdah (the prostration), Imam 'Ali ('a) states

If the person performing prayers could perceive the mercy of Allah that" (encompasses him, he would never raise his head from prostration."(2

In connection with the role of prayer in the purification of the soul, edification of character and cleansing the psyche of impurities and corruption, the Noble Prophet :(S) states

If there were in the house of anyone of you a stream and you washed yourselves" five times in it, would any dirt remain on

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.Tafsir Abu al-Futuh, vol. ۱, p. ۱۰۳ -۱
.Ghurar al-Hikam, p. ۶۰۵ -۲

your bodies? One of the companions said, 'No'. The Noble Prophet (S) stated, 'The similitude of prayer to a flowing river is that whenever a person prays, his sins are (forgiven in the intermittence of two prayers'."(1

b) The Status and Rank of Fasting

The Prophet (S) has set forth fasting as a shield against the fire because it is a means of ascending through the spiritual stations, of man's growth, and it is a barrier against .the Devil

Mankind possesses a carnal soul which is always pulling him towards spiritual decadence and losing his divine personality. It is for this reason that Imam 'Ali ('a) :states

I am afraid of two things for you, one is obeying the carnal soul and the other is" protracted hopes; because following the carnal soul is an impediment to right and (prolonged hopes cause forgetting the hereafter."(2

Because Allah has love and affection for His slaves, He has provided them with the means of making up for the oppression that they have committed against themselves .and has caused them to be driven away from Allah's divine presence

One of those means is fasting which cleanses the soul of the effects of its ugly works .and brings about patience and endurance against hardships and sins

Regardless of the importance of fasting and its role in self-edification, special reward has been designated for fasting on some of the days and months; amongst them fasting in the month of Sha'ban and Rajab discharging of which was resolutely done by the saints [awliya'] of religion and

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.Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. ٣, p. ٧ -١
.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٧٧, p. ٤١٩ -٢

.the great scholars

c) The Status and Rank of Jihad

Jihad and striving in the way of Allah is a cause of honor and dignity and has a lively role in the protection and preservation of religion and the people. If it were not for the jihad and spiritual struggle, religion and its beliefs would have been exterminated because materialists and opportunists, in order to attain their worldly desires, do not .relinquish their hostility and fight against religion

The spiritual wars of the saints [awliya'] of Allah have been the reason why religion has remained preserved from their danger and we are benefiting from the fruits of those wars today. It is for this reason that the ways of life of the holy soldiers and .fighters shine and they have been the object of Allah's mercy and grace

:With regard to them, Allah states

لاَ يَسْتَوِى الْقَاعِدُونَ مِنْ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُوْلى الضَّرَرِ وَالْمُجَاهِدُونَ فِى سَبِيلِ اللهِ بِأَمْوالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فَضَّلَ اللهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ

وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ دَرَجَةً...

The holders back from among the believers, not having any injury [or valid excuse],“ and those who strive in Allah’s way with their property and their persons are not equal, Allah has made the strivers with their property and their persons to excel the holders back a high degree...”(1)

The point which has been emphasized by the Noble Prophet (S) is that what comes out of the mouth cannot come out of the other limbs and organs of the body and what is built by the tongue is higher than what is built

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۱- Surat al-Nisa ۴:۹۵.

by prayer, fasting and the jihad, whether what is uttered by the tongue is in the form of enjoining the right and forbidding the evil as has been mentioned in the hadiths that forbidding the evil and enjoining the right is higher than the holy jihad, or is in the form of teaching and educating others; because guiding an ignorant man towards right is higher than any other spiritual striving [jihad].

Likewise, they make us understand that performing recommendable works not only discharging time-consuming and long acts of worship but light recommendable works can be fulfilled by the tongue too without expending a lot of capital, effort and time. Therefore, the value of the tongue ought to be known and protected from pollution and contamination so that man’s works are not performed in vain.

The Differences of Believers in Their Enjoying the Different Levels of Paradise

With regard to the different levels of the Garden of eternal bliss, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

“O Abu Dharr! The distance between the different levels of paradise is like that between the earth and the sky. A dweller of paradise looks above himself and then his eyes meet with a ray of light so bright that it makes him blind, and he asks what light

that is. It will be said to him that this is the light of your brother so and so. He will protest that we all used to perform worthy works with brother so and so, why has he been accorded superiority over me? It will be said to him that brother

p: ۱۲۴

so and so had superiority over you in performing good works. Then, contentment will be placed in his heart and he will become pleased with his station."

It is surprising that they do not tell that dweller of paradise that your brother's works were more than yours, but tell him that his works were better; that is to say, the quality of his works was higher and he used to have an attentive heart during his acts of devotion and prayer and sincerity. It is natural that man ought to regret when he sees his friends taking precedence over him. If man lags behind the others in the world, he can manage to make up for his lagging behind, but there is no opportunity for compensation and discharging duties in the hereafter, that is why punishment and regret in the hereafter is more regretful than anything else, but despite that there is a ground for regret in the dwellers of the Garden of eternal bliss, Allah does not let them get afflicted by remorse. This is a well-kept secret whose explanation is difficult for us.

Now the question which arises is how come the dwellers of paradise do not get afflicted by remorse despite seeing their friends taking precedence over them? In this regard, a metaphor has been narrated from the Prophet Jesus (S) in the Gospel of Barnabas that he stated, "In this world no short man desires to wear long clothes and no tall man desires to wear short

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clothes."

It can be gathered from this simile that every one in the Garden of eternal bliss gets contented with what they have earned and do not expect more than their stations and in reality perceive the rank that they have attained as befitting to them. When he sees a number of people, like the prophets (S), residing in a higher station than his, he

conceives their rank as befitting to them and perceives their station as a long wide .dress for his stature

The dwellers of paradise get freed from ugliness and filth before their death and in the limbo [barzakh], and attain the perfection that they rightfully deserve. It is for this reason that every person gets contented with what they have earned and Allah .grants him peaceful contentment

(Lesson ۱۱: The Importance and Role of Fear and Sorrow (۱

point

This section of the Noble Prophet's (S) advices is related to fear and sorrow. It seems that the relationship between this section and the previous sections lies in the fact that once man has planned to devote his life to worship and servitude of Allah, which is that same real perfection, he needs means and tools which can help him prepare .better for his movement towards perfection

In order for decision and will power to appear in man, special pre-requisites and basics have to be fulfilled. (In man's soul conception and affirmations and spiritual states like feelings and emotions prepare the ground for will power and decision.) Therefore, if those pre-requisites are properly used once they are met, or

after their being fulfilled, a suitable opportunity for man's advancement towards .perfection is said to have been made available

All too often, man desires something but mere desiring does not cause him to resolve to take action, but sometimes spiritual states appear which impel him to take action and advancement; in reality, these spiritual states bring valuable opportunities into .appearance

Fear and Sorrow and Abstinence from Sin

One of the spiritual states which impels man to take action and becomes a strong

incentive for abstaining from sin is fear and sorrow. The two greatly help man to come to himself, make the most of his time and not use it in pursuit of vain and futile activities. Of course, not every kind of fear and sorrow is praiseworthy and motivates man to search and work. Sorrow which causes man to get affected by dejection and to quit everything leaving him with neither the vigor to worship nor the energy to work is blameworthy and likewise fear which causes the termination of man's hope and leads to despondency in such a way that man too gets pessimistic about himself is .blameworthy

Not only do some of the fears and sorrows not inspire man to spiritual journeying to Allah but become its hindrances and impediments, like the fears and sorrows which occur with regard to the world; one loses an amount of money and they are ever after gloomy and sorrowful as to the cause of their loss. Even in prayer one is thinking about that lost money! Or

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fear which one has with regard to losing his property and opportunities; man fears that he will lose his post and position. These kinds of fears and sorrows become a .hindrance in spiritual wayfaring to Allah

Of course, sometimes it occurs that sorrow with regard to issues of the world is related to Allah, like when an affliction befalls man and they fear that it might be divine requital. It is natural that this kind of fear and dread will become a source of motion for them. Or one becomes heartbroken at losing some [worldly] favors and a cause of their awakening that they ought not to fall in love with the world. Therefore, it is likely that fear of losing worldly blessings can indirectly motivate man to motion in .the direction of eschatological and spiritual perfection

Allah, the Exalted, states in two verses that once We send prophets ('a) to the people, :We afflict them with hardships and adversities

وَمَا اَرْسَلْنَا فِی قَرْیَهٍ مِنْ نَبِیٍّ اِلَّا أَخَذْنَا أَهْلَهَا بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ یَضَّرَّعُونَ

“And We did not send a prophet in a town but We overtook its people with distress and affliction in order that they might humble themselves.”[(١)]

And in another verse, Allah states:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلى أُمَمٍ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُونَ

“And certainly We sent apostles to nations before you, then We seized them with distress and affliction in order that they might humble themselves.”[(٢)]

It is because of His grace for them that Allah afflicts His slaves with

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١- Surat al-A‘raf ٧:٩۴.
٢- Surat al-An‘am ۶:۴٢.

hardships and problems in order for it to become a cause of alertness and vigilance for them and awakening from heedlessness so as to acquire more preparedness for accepting right. Because until man is intoxicated with pleasure and elation and drowned in prosperity, he lacks the preparedness to accept right and what is related to the hereafter.

Fear and Sorrow and the Spiritual Ascension and Growth of Man

It has been said that fear and dread with regard to matters of the hereafter causes spiritual ascendance, perfection and prosperity. In this regard, Allah states:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَى * فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى

“And as for him who fears to stand in the presence of his Lord and forbids the soul from low desires; then surely the Garden—that is the abode.”[(١)]

With regard to the role of piety in keeping man away from sins and fear of Allah, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states:

“O creatures of Allah! Certainly fear of Allah has saved the lovers of Allah from

unlawful items gave His dread to their hearts till their nights are passed in (wakefulness and their days in thirst."(2)

Elsewhere, Imam 'Ali ('a) introduces fear of Allah as a sign of good opinion with regard :to Allah

(The most fearful of Allah is the one who holds good thoughts about him."(3)"

The Difference between Fear and Sorrow

point

Sorrow occurs in circumstances once favor has been divested of man or when harm is directed at him and causes grief and contrition. It is natural that this condition is related to a matter which happened in the past; for instance, man has

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1- Surat al-Nazi'at 79:40-41.
2- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. 353, sermon [khutbah] 113, trans. Fayd al-Islam.
3- Ibid., p. 887.

done an indecent action which resulted in bad effects, one has said bad words which resulted in the disgrace and defamation of someone else and is remorseful as a result of it. Or, he had capital from which he could have benefited enormously but has lost it. In any case, sorrow and grief overtake man once he loses opportunities or he is .deprived of blessings and/or calamities befall him

Fear occurs with regard to the occurrences and matters which will occur in the future: he fears that an ordeal will befall him, an affliction or misfortune will be directed at him, and/or a blessing will be taken away from him. In reality, fear and sorrow are two similar qualities of the soul whose adjuncts are different; one is related to the past .and the other is connected to future

For the reason that danger always exists in this world, the being of fear in man is

natural because man is an entity that is prone to injury, and there is always the .possibility of his health, life and ease and security falling in danger

The difference between a believer and a unbeliever lies in the fact that the believer does not have an autonomous opinion about the common causes [or ordinary means] and believes that everything springs from Allah, for this reason he fears Allah but a nonbeliever does not conceive Allah, someone in whose hands all the sovereignty lies, and maintains that there are autonomous common causes [or ordinary

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means]. Of course, in the same way which the believer fears Allah because of conceiving all the authority in Him, it is only in Allah that he puts his faith for the reason .that he does not believe in an intermediary role other than Allah

:It has been recorded in a hadith that

Allah subdues the others for a person who is Allah-fearing and He fills with fear" (everyone who is not afraid of Him."(۱

Once a believer has gathered that all the means lie in Allah's hands and all the sovereignty of the world belongs to Him, he does not perceive any autonomy for others save Allah but only reveres Allah because he has been relying on Allah and fears only Him and day by day his faith gets increased and in the end Allah grants him so much power that he fears none save Allah and the others get overcome by him. He is inflexible in the face of falsehood and discharges whatever obligation he has diagnosed. But people do not fear someone who does not venerate Allah and they compromise with other people in order to safeguard their position and try to gratify .others

The natural disposition of man is such that whenever he is happy and overjoyed with the world and is busy with himself, he lags behind in paying attention to Allah and spiritual matters. It is for this reason that in the Qur'an this drunken ecstasy is :castigated

وَلَئِنْ أَذَقْنَاهُ نَعْمَاءَ بَعْدَ ضَرّآءَ مَسَّتْهُ لَيَقُولَنَّ ذَهَبَ السَّيِّأَتُ عَنِّى

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۶۹, p. ۴۰۶ -۱

إِنَّهُ لَفَرِحٌ فَخُورٌ

And if We make him taste favor after distress has afflicted him, he will certainly say,“ (‘The evils are gone away from me. Most surely, he is exulting, boasting.”(۱

:Castigating the world, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states

What is your condition? You feel satisfied with what little you have secured from … “ this world while much of the next world of which you have been deprived does not grieve you. The little of this world which you lose pains you so much so that it becomes apparent in your faces, and in the lack of endurance over whatever is taken away from you; as if this world is your permanent abode, and as though its wealth would (stay with you for good.”(۲

Opposite to this merrymaking and joyousness is sorrow and sadness about the past and dread in regard to the future which make man inclined towards obedience, worship and devotion to Allah. It is for this reason that these two psychological mentalities and emotions have been hailed, as the import of some of the traditions impart [to us] that Allah grants favor upon a community amongst whom there is a sorrowful man. Essentially, people who used to derive benefit from the directions and the divine invitations of the prophets (‘a) and saints [awliya’] of Allah were people who .held fear of Allah in their hearts

... إِنَّمَا تُنْذِرُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَيْبِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلوةَ ...

(You warn only those who fear their Lord in secret and keep up prayer…”(۳“

The invitation and

1- Surat Hud 11:10.

2- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. 350, sermon [khutbah] 111, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

3- Surat Fatir 35:18.

instruction of the Prophets (S) are ineffective in people who do not fear Allah, as Allah states:

... سَوآءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنْذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنْذِرْهُمْ لا يُؤْمِنُونَ

"Surely those who disbelieve, it being alike to them whether you warn them, or do not warn them, will not believe."(1)

The notion of fear of Allah

Man fears something which harms and poses danger for him. Now what is the purport of fear of Allah, the Merciful, who does not intend to harm His slaves? It can be said, in general, that in reality man's fear springs from danger that will be directed at him and contingently of someone who will direct that harm at him. When man fears his enemy, it is basically his foe's torture and injury which he fears and his fear of his adversary is by accident.

From the material aspect, when man believes that control of the cosmos and its causes lies in Allah's hands, his fear of Allah denotes apprehension of nature's wrath and worldly calamities because he knows that once he becomes an object of Allah's anger, nature and its material causes will be wrathful to him and consequently earthquakes and floods and the rest of the heavenly and earthly tribulations will be directed at him for the reason that nature's anger is derived from the wrath of Allah.

It can be gathered from the Noble Prophet's (S) sayings in this section of the hadith that sorrow and fear are desirable once its domain develops from volitional premises and reflection and meditation and

.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۶ -۱

later on stimulate man to move along the path of Allah and perfection; not that every .fear and sorrow ought to be desirable

Grief and sorrows which crush man [by destroying his self-confidence and vigor] and impedes him from working and living is not desirable. It occupies him when he wants to study, and during prayer the worries of this world hinder him from being absorbed with Allah. These [kinds of] sorrows and woes are not only undesirable but are .robbers

Some people who are cowards lose their peace of mind and ease if they perceive a possibility that danger will be directed at them, even if that likelihood is meager. This kind of fear is worthless. Fear and sorrow has value when it leads to man's spiritual progression. With these expositions, the connection between fear and sorrow and obedience and devotional servitude to Allah becomes obvious and that all too often man derives the best benefit from these two states in order to attain his perfection .and bliss

The World Is a Prison for a Believer and Paradise for an Infidel

For the purpose of bringing about the conditions for fear and sorrow and clarifying :these two, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! The world is prison for a believer and paradise for an infidel, no believer" ".turns his night into morning save with grief

Once this feeling that he is in prison has been enlivened in man, he does not anticipate merrymaking [in this world] and does not think about being preoccupied with the pleasures of this world. He [only] derives benefit from the

p: ۱۳۴

blessings of this world to the degree of gaining enough ability for spiritual journeying. He thanks Allah after deriving benefit from every blessing and attaining every

.gratification

In contrast [to the believer], the world is paradise for an unbeliever, because he can strive to attain his comfort and satisfaction as long as he is in this world and if luxury and pleasure ever occur for him, it is in this world and he will be entangled in the requital of Allah on the Day of Resurrection for the ugly works which he perpetrated in this world. The punishment and wrath of Allah is so intense that the world, in spite of !all its problems, is [still] paradise for him

There is a famous narrative that a poor and sickly Jew approached Imam al-Hasan (‘a), who was dressed in costly clothes and mounted on a horse, and said, “Your grandfather stated that the world is a jail for a believer and a heaven for a nonbeliever. Now for who is the world a paradise, for you who are mounted on a horse with magnificence and glory, or for me who is poor and sick? With all the ’!encumbrances and hardships, the world is hell for me, not paradise

Imam al-Hasan (‘a) stated, “If you knew what hard punishment Allah has in store for you, you would understand that the world, in this same state that you are, is paradise. In contrast, if you would perceive what stations Allah has kept in store

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for us, you would understand that [even] if the whole world were given to us, it would ”.be nothing more than prison

Once the world is a jail for a believer, it is natural that he is sorrowful because prison is .not a place of joyousness

It is worthy of mention that commendation of sorrow in this hadith does not imply that every sorrow is praiseworthy and that man has to try to be sad all the time. It is not feasible to deduce such a general and common connotation [from the above statements in regard to sorrow]. It is doubtless that every point which is mentioned in such kind of admonitions is restricted and its scope is limited; but with the help of research and acquaintance with the words of Allah and of the Infallible Imams (‘a),

one ralizes that in what instances comprehensive and general judgments become .limited

Meditation about Hell Is a Cause of Fear and Sorrow for a Believer

:In connection to the reasons for a believer's sorrow, the Noble Prophet (S) states

With regard to the fact that Allah has given the news that he will cast man into hell" and has not promised him to release him from there, why ought not a believer to be "?sorrowful

One of the causes of fear and sorrow in man, especially a believer, is contemplation about the unequivocal promise of Allah that all people will enter hell and in this connection the Noble Prophet (S) prepares the ground for sorrow by mentioning this .point

:In this regard, Allah states

وَإِنْ مِنْكُمْ اِلَّا وَارِدُهَا كَانَ عَلَى

p: ۱۳۶

رَبِّک حَتْمًا مَقْضِيًّا

And there is none of you but shall come to it, this is an unavoidable decree of your" (Lord."(۱

A believer has faith in the Qur'an and the explicit judgment of Allah that he will enter heaven and no one has the guarantee of being taken out of hell. Yes, those who are an object of Allah's grace and favor, and have been successful at discharging Allah's duties, will be released from hell but they do not know whether they belong to that group or not. This very thought is enough for them [to become fearful and sorrowful]. He does not know what his fate will be; for this reason joyousness and happiness are .meaningless to him and this thought and sorrow restrains him from heedlessness

This apprehension and anxiety prompts man to come to themselves and desert

merrymaking and partying and ponder about his destination. Of course, there are also other causes and factors in the world which result in man's sorrow and sadness, like being affected by illnesses and calamities. Or that a man's rights are violated and they :are not able to get justice done; in this connection, the Noble Prophet (S) states

A believing man is confronted with illnesses, encumbrances, unforeseen hardships" and oppression, but no one helps him. For this reason, he asks Allah, the Exalted, for ".help and reward and compensation

Even if the causes and factors which give rise to sorrow are countless, some sorrow which arises from some of them is

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.Surat Maryam ۱۹:۷۱ -۱

not so worthwhile and plays no role in a believer's self-building and edification of character because these kinds of woes also come to pass for others. Sorrow and grief is very desirable when it arises from a believer's knowledge that he is likely not to be .released from hell once he enters it

:In continuation, the Prophet (S) states

A believer departs from the world in a sorrowful state, but he is led towards the ease" ".and grace of Allah once he departs

As has been said, until a believer is in this world, he is faced with worries and woes as a result of which he gets sad and grieves and/or gets despondent when he thinks about his pre-destination and looks at the shortcomings of his past. Therefore, that time when he leaves this world which is entirely filled with encumbrances and sorrow towards the eternal world and the proximity of right is when his sadness and sorrow .comes to an end and that's when he gets happy and joyous

".O Abu Dharr! Allah has not been worshiped in the same way as prolonged sorrow"

A slave who is always afraid of Allah and has been patient in the face of hardships has .been more devoted to Allah than everyone else

It is natural that once man was fearful and sorrowful with regard to his destination, he supplicates and prays to the Divine Threshold and consequently he cleanses his inside of impurities and sin. Likewise, he engages in more worthy worship accompanied

by more wakefulness and vigilance and purity of heart is a precondition for the acceptance of prayer. Therefore, sorrow and grief is itself worship because it makes .man attentive to his position of servitude and the greatness of his Lord

Now that the discussion has come this far, there is room for us to cite some hadiths regarding the state and station of a believer at the time of his death and meeting Allah, the Merciful. It has been recorded in a hadith that at the time of a believer's :death, two angels say to him

O friend of Allah! Do not be sorrowful or fearful and receive the glad tidings of" paradise and rejoice. Fear and sorrow will not affect you and you are not deserving of that. Verily Allah, the Exalted, has willed to free you from every pain and punishment and make you partake of the sweetness of Allah's mercy. Verily, hell is closed over (you and you will never enter hell at all."(١

;Imam 'Ali ('a) states

My friend and brother, the Prophet of Allah, said to me, 'A person who is happily" looking forward to meeting Allah and not to be rejected by Him ought to choose you to be his guardian and a person who gets happily anxious to meet Allah and for Allah to be pleased by him should love your son al-Hasan, and a person who is gladly looking (forward to meeting Allah without being fearful must love your son al-Husayn."(٢

(Lesson ١٢: The Importance and Role of Fear and Sorrow (٢

point

The greatest blessing

p: ۱۳۹

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۸, p. ۲۱, hadith ۲۰۵ -۱

.Ibid., vol. ۲۷, p. ۱۰۷, hadith ۸۱ -۲

which Allah has granted to us is the gift of Islam and the guardianship of the Ahl al-bayt (‘a). Under the auspices of the guidelines and directives of that Pure Household, colossal treasures of their advices and knowledge have been transmitted to us with the help of the strenuous efforts of the great scholars over the past fourteen centuries. The least gratitude we can express concerning this great favor is study and research of these invaluable hoards of knowledge and making practicable use of them and increasing awareness of them. It is under the auspices of the guardianship of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and their directives that we get led from the darkness of ignorance and unawareness to the light of knowledge and awareness; as we read in :the Jami‘ah Supplication

Thanks to your leadership and custodianship, Allah made us know the knowledge“ (and truths of the religion and set right our corrupt worldly affairs…”(۱

The luminous advices of the Noble Prophet (S) are a clear example of their instructions. There is room for us to derive benefit from these advices and recommendations in order to attain the prosperity of this world and the hereafter because Islam and its instructions are the best prescription that secures man’s .worldly and eschatological prosperity and all his material and psychological needs

Beneficial and Valuable Knowledge

O Abu Dharr! Whoever imparts knowledge which does not cause weeping has“ passed on fruitless knowledge, because Allah has thus described the scholars in the Qur’an, ‘Surely, those who are given the knowledge before it

p: ۱۴۰

.Mafatih al-Jinan, p. ١٠٩, the Islamic Culture Propagation Publications -١

".'fall down on their faces, making obeisance when it is recited them

Islam is a comprehensive and complete school of thought which, by inviting man to perfection, aims at training and instructing him in social and ethical aspects and other prospects. Man attains perfection once he counterbalances all the academic, ethical and evaluative aspects and angles. Islam grants the same value to ethical and spiritual issues to the same extent that it grants to knowledge, expertise, independent reasoning and Islamic jurisprudence and law and a perfect man thrives for growth in the academic and jurisprudential aspects as much as he flourishes in the ethical .aspects, too

Unfortunately, sometimes attending to academic issues prevents us from paying heed to ethical issues, whose worth is not less than that of academic matters. In the same way that attending to social issues makes man heedless of spiritual and ethical issues. Man gets so immersed in social and official duties that he does not find an opportunity to engage in himself and probe into his ethical needs. In order for us not to get proud and heedless, sometimes it is necessary to pay heed to ethical and .spiritual issues, too

This section of the hadiths depends on this point that if Allah has granted us knowledge, He wants us to pay heed to ethical matters too because if we only attend to academic issues and get negligent of ourselves, we will get afflicted by ethical .deviations such as laxity and egotism

Some values have been

mentioned in the Qur'an which unfortunately have been forgotten in our society [today], even though some people pay heed to them, but still it is not to the extent of these values finding their way to the social scene. This is in spite of the fact that the Qur'an believes those qualities and values to be attributes of devoted worshippers

and the scholars. One of those attributes and qualities is fear of Allah and the state of .supplication and lamentation

Perhaps the reason for stressing the quality of sorrow and grief and humility is for the reason of setting the personality of a believer in equilibrium, especially an intellectual, because knowledge and awareness have a high station and are the most eminent values for man after piety. It is natural that the one who has attained knowledge becomes honored and respected in society and this itself gives birth to pride and .vanity and naturally the academic is faced with the danger of corruption

The divine law [shar'] of Islam, in order to obstruct the scholar from egotism and self-importance and setting his personality balance, recommends him to humility, yielding before Allah and weeping and wailing, so that the higher he rises in social position, the smaller and humbler he perceives himself. This is the same thing that Imam al-Sajjad ('a) requests from Allah on noble moral traits and acts pleasing to Allah:

"O Allah! Bless Muhammad and his Household, raise me not a single degree before the people without lowering me

to the same extent in myself and bring about no outward exaltation for me without an inward abasement in myself to the same measure..."(۱)

With regard to what has been cited, the Prophet (S) states to Abu Dharr that if your knowledge does not give rise to humility and modesty and does not bring forth crying in you, know that that knowledge is not beneficial to you. Knowledge is beneficial and rewarding which adds to man's yielding before his Lord. As Allah describes the intellectuals in the Qur'an that when the divine verses are recited to them, they at once fall prostrating on the ground and make humble entreaties and supplications [to .their Lord]. This is a sign of man's submissiveness to Allah

Even if it is considered an outward act but still it arises from the transformation of the heart and inside; until man's heart has not become sorrowful and man has not

.become humble in his heart, the state of crying does not come about in man

:In continuation of the hadith, the Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Every person can make himself cry because of fear of Allah and not" every person can make his hearts acquainted with sorrow and force himself to cry ".because a hard heart is far from Allah; but they do not perceive this denotation

As has previously been mentioned, the crying which has been recommended in the hadiths, one of which is this hadith, is weeping as a result of fear of being deprived

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۱- Mafatih al-Jinan, Du'a' Makarim al-Akhlaq.

of the prosperity of the hereafter and getting polluted by sin and/or lamenting because of spiritual deprivations and due to the absence of the Imam of the Age—may Allah hasten his reappearance—and higher than all these is lamentation because [of deprivation from the beatific vision of Allah [liqa' Allah.

Those who are lovers of Allah and cognition of the divine guardianship weep as a result of fear of being deprived of the beatific meeting with Allah, in the same way :that Imam 'Ali ('a) states in Du'a' al-Kumayl

I am at crossroads O my Allah O my Master! I could bear your fire with patience, but" "!how can I bear separation from Thee

If it is not possible for someone to cry, then at least one ought to inculcate his hearts with topics that cause sorrow and/or meditate upon his spiritual privations and reflect upon his sins in order to make his hearts grieved. If his heart still does not become sorrowful, then he ought to at least dissemble to be anguished. If sadness does not occur for someone and he was always overjoyed and pompous, he gets deprived of .Allah's mercy

Of course, it is to be taken for granted that every person who has a state of weeping

and wailing is close to Allah, because it is also possible for the hypocrites to attain this state as a result of causing and maintaining certain feelings in themselves in order to quickly become sad and start crying. Opposed to that, it

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cannot be asserted that whoever does not get sad and does not cry is stone-hearted .and far from Allah

Security and Peace in Paradise Are a Product of Fear and Dread of Allah in the World

O Abu Dharr! Allah states, 'I do not mix two fears and also two securities in [any] one" of my slaves. If he were secure in this world, I will scare him in the next world. If he ".'were afraid of me in this world, I will make him secure in the next world

Being secure from divine machinations is a cause of becoming polluted by sin because once man perceives himself at liberty to do whatever he fancies and has no fear and apprehension whatsoever, he has no qualms about committing sin. It is natural that feeling safe in the world—which causes being polluted by deviations and sin—goes :with insecurity and punishment; in this regard Allah states

فَأَمَّا مَنْ طَغَى * واثَرَ الْحَيَوةَ الدُّنْيا * فَإِنَّ الْجَحِيمَ هِىَ الْمَأْوَى

Then as for him who is inordinate, and prefers the life of this world, then surely the" (hell, that is the abode."(۱

The Prophet's (S) remark in this section is expressive of the fact that man can do something to bring about fear of Allah in his heart. After man has comprehended that fear of Allah is desirable and results in the attainment of the hereafter, the question arises as to how it is possible to cause fear and dread in oneself? In response to this question, it can be said that this state arises in man by making some of the necessary preparations

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.Surat al-Nazi'at ۷۹:۳۷-۳۹ -۱

:and paying heed to some of the issues

Sometimes man knows certain things but because they do not pay heed to those known facts, his faith and knowledge are dormant and faint-colored and an individual becomes negligent and in the end that knowledge and belief does not produce its effects. But every time a person pays heed to the causes giving birth to fear and whenever he tries to pay attention to that fear, his fear and dread increase and affect .his behavior

The other point is that man can attain a position where he concurrently combines sorrows and raptures. Weak people cannot have sorrow and happiness at the same time. They have either happiness and delight or sorrow at a time. Once the soul gets stronger and more perfect, it is possible that at one time, he becomes happy from one point of view and from the other perspective gets sad and sorrowful, and bit by bit attains a level where as a result of the perfection of the heart and soul, he muster in himself kinds of sorrows and raptures in the same way that the saints [awliya'] of Allah used to gather in themselves different kinds of fears and sorrows and raptures and hopes. People who have achieved those stations have different spiritual states simultaneously and can manage to produce the different effects and conditions in .themselves

The Forgiveness of Sins Is a Result of Fear of Allah

:In connection with the fruits of fear of Allah, the Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! On the Day of Resurrection, the sins"

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of a believing slave will be shown, he will say, 'I was scared of the consequences of ".this action.' As a result of this, his sins will get forgiven

We have so far understood the importance of fear of Allah and have known its role in

giving aid to man in his journeying towards Allah. In regard to this matter the Prophet (S) hints at some of the benefits and profits of fearing Allah in order to produce or strengthen in us the motivation of bringing about fear. He states that one of the .benefits of fear of Allah is forgiveness and remission of sins

:In general, every individual can have two conditions

At the time of committing sin, he had no fear of the consequences of his action, and .۱ enjoyed deriving gratification from his sins in relaxation and peace of mind and without any worry and anxiety. Such a condition results in being encouraged to sin more and as a result adamant persistence at perpetrating that sin and the end result .is the bad end for man

At the moment of perpetrating sin, he is fearful of Allah and his end and destination. .۲ He fears to die before succeeding at repentance. This fear and dread causes a decrease of pleasure at the time of committing sin and consequently leads to .repentance and the forgiveness of sins

It is natural that on the Day of Resurrection, man will be held accountable for his sins, and if that sin has not been compensated

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for and amended, and has not even been repented for, because if he had repented he would have been forgiven, he will be led towards hell. But because Allah's slave was fearful and dreadful in the world, they say: "O Lord! I was scared of the consequences of my sin at the time of committing sin." As a result of this, their sin will be forgiven. Therefore, if man is afraid of Allah with regard to his sin, the hope is that he will be .forgiven on the Day of Resurrection

Fear of Allah causes a reduction of sin and man's wakefulness and vigilance and is itself a cause of warning against negligence in man at the time of deviation and error. It is for this reason that the fearful and dreadful of Allah have been praised and a .promise of reward has been promised for fear of Allah

With one brief overview at the verses of the Qur'an, we arrive at this conclusion that the differences of the levels of fear are related to the levels of man's knowledge and cognition; that is to say, wise people, amongst them the Infallible Imams ('a), have a higher level of fear of Allah and the rest of the people are at a lower level. The Qur'an :recites two adjuncts for fear and dread

.Fear of the presence of Allah .۱

.Fear of divine punishment .۲

:In Surat Ibrahim, Allah states

لَنُسْكِنَنَّكُم الأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامِی وَخَافَ وَعِیدِ

"And most surely, We will

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settle you in the land after them; this is for him who fears standing in My presence (and who fears My threat."(۱

In this verse, both fear of Allah and dread of divine punishment have been mentioned. .The highest position of fear is fear of Allah's presence

The deceased 'Allamah Tabataba'i states, "Fear of Allah denotes dread of Allah's punishment that results from unbelief and sin and its requisite is that man's acts of worship have been performed for release from divine retribution, not worship solely for Allah. This is the worship of slaves who devote themselves to their Master as a .result of fear of punishment

Likewise, some people devote themselves to Allah out of desire for divine reward and payment, and this kind of worship has acquired the name 'worship of the traders'. But fear of the divine presence is other than fear of divine retribution. This fear arises from a feeling of smallness and abjectness in the face of Allah's greatness and His divine realm, and is a fruit of humility and lowliness in the face of the honor and .sovereignty of Allah

In reality, worship and servitude is [done] as a result of fear of the divine presence" and with the denotation of humility and homage, not because of fear of divine retribution and/or as a result of coveting divine reward and payment, and this sincere worship only takes place for Allah. Therefore, people who fear the divine presence of Allah are the purified and fearful in

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۱- ۱۴:۱۴ Surat Ibrahim.

the face of the majesty of Allah."(۱)

Criticizing Dependence on Good Works

The Noble Prophet (S) reproaches a person who performs sin because of being confident of his good works, and states:

"O Abu Dharr! A man performs good works and by putting his confidence in it, commits sins and perceives sin as light in comparison to his good works, such a person gets agitated when he goes to the divine presence of Allah. Opposite to him is a man who commits sin and is fearful and dreadful of divine retribution, such a person will have a free conscience on the Day of Resurrection."

The criteria of acceptance or lack of acceptance of works cannot be measured by outward criteria but acceptance and lack of acceptance of works is connected to conditions which all too often man does not manage to compute.

Therefore, no one can be sure of the approval of his works. In addition to that, surety of the acceptance of acts of worship gives birth to self-conceit in man, to the extent that it is possible to contaminate himself with venial sins vis-à-vis the good works which he has committed on the pretext that minor sins are nothing in comparison to the good works which he has discharged heedless of the fact that firstly confidence in the approval of his acts of devotion was misplaced, because oftentimes his works might not be accepted, secondly not paying heed to venial sins is itself an unpardonable sin. That man feels safe and assured as a result

.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۱۹, p. ۱۲۲ -۱

of reliance on the good works he has performed and perceives sin to be small and considers it as unimportant as a result of depending on his acts of devotion is enough .to make man an object of Allah's wrath

In contrast to this group, some people are fearful and anxious and always worried once they commit sin. This group, even if they do not have a lot of will power to discharge some of the acts of worship, will be freed from the divine retribution of Allah because of their fear and dread in regard to sin, and will be in peace and security there. (The Noble Prophet's (S) expression in this section has another interpretation (.which has previous been mentioned

The Noble Prophet's (S) intention is to direct Abu Dharr's attention to the importance of the spiritual states of the heart and how effective fear of sin is, to the extent that once man commits sin, anxiety, worry and distress of the heart will result in his forgiveness and remission. Opposite to this, even if he performs a lot of acts of worship but feels secure and safe from the repercussions of venial sins, which is proof that he has regarded sin as light and pays no heed to Who he is disobeying, he will be afflicted by divine wrath. Therefore, no sin ought to be considered as minor [or pardonable] and always make effort to preserve in ourselves fear and dread of Allah so as not to become

.self-conceited and deceived by the accursed Devil

The Role of Paying Heed to Sin in Shunning the Devil

:Higher than what has been said, the Noble Prophet (S) states in the next sentence

O Abu Dharr! Allah's slave commits sin and as a result of that [sin] goes to heaven." I" said, "O Prophet of Allah! May my father and mother be thy ransom! How possible is

that?” He stated, “He always perceives his sin and repents it, seeks refuge in Allah ”.until finally he enters paradise

Sometimes, man commits sin and as a result of that is anxious and worried and this very fear and dread gives rise to repentance and seeking refuge in Allah and release from the trap of the accursed Devil. Consequently, once he gets freed from negligence and cravings of the flesh, he no longer perpetrates sin and as a result of this enters the Garden of eternal bliss. Perhaps, if that sin were not committed by him, this feeling would not have been aroused in him. Of course, the proximate [or immediate] cause of paying heed to Allah and fleeing from the accursed Devil is that same repentance, fear and dread of Allah and sin is a remote [or distant] cause but at .any rate that too has become a factor

This statement of the Prophet (S) is intended to encourage man to [pay heed] to this point that they ought to arouse in their souls a feeling of fear and dread. Fear which results in compensating for past sins and makes the individual who enters the Garden

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.of bliss not of meager value, therefore we ought to strive to attain it

A Study of the Nature of Fear and Sorrow and the Meaning of Fear of Allah

point

Up to this section, the discussion has been connected to fear and dread which has been cited in the hadiths. Now is the time to present some questions and their :responses even if these queries are not directly related to this ethical discussion

One of the questions pertains to whether having the condition [or state] of fear is good or bad? If it is good, then why does Allah describe his saints [awliya’] as ‘and there is no fear for him nor shall he grieve’(۱)? And if it is bad, then why does the Noble Prophet (S) encourage others to give rise to this feeling in their hearts? And also why ?has he stated that these two are a cause of forgiveness and remission of sins

Two responses ought to be given, fear and sorrow are not in themselves, without taking into consideration their two adjuncts [or attachments], desirable or reproachable. It cannot be said with generality that they are either good or bad, but the cause of that fear and the cause of that sorrow have to be taken into .consideration

Fear of Allah and His retribution is desirable, because it results in man standing up to perform acts of worship and obedience of Allah and abstinence from sins and in the end it helps man to better discharge his duties and with the acquisition of the path to prosperity and bliss, become a dweller of

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۱- ۲:۱۱۲ Surat al-Baqarah.

the Garden of eternal bliss. Opposite to it is undesirable fear as a result of the world, for the reason that the origin [or roots] of inclination to the world is not good, worse .with fear of it. The other query concerns what the interpretation of fear of Allah is

In response it ought to be said that fear of Allah is a reflection of dread of ourselves and the actions which man has committed, otherwise Allah is the source of mercy and compassion. Fear of Allah is because of His being 'the One who inflicts intense punishment' [shadid al-'iqab], He does not overlook man's actions and He keeps count .of every deed

The other point whose mentioning is necessary is that in one general division, three :kinds of fear of Allah can be cited

Fear of Divine Retribution In Hell (۱

This is the level of ordinary people. In most people dread of the eternal inferno and divine retribution causes them to discharge their religious duties and not stain themselves with sin. Of course, it ought to be mentioned that this stage is very valuable for those who are at the beginning of growth and perfection and this fear

gives fruit to prosperity and freedom from divine punishment if it is effective in making man abstain from sin.

Fear of Losing The Gifts Of Paradise (۲

Some people refrain from sin and discharge their religious obligations as a result of fearing to be deprived of the blessings of the eternal blissful Garden, in reality their longing for the Garden of eternal bliss impels them to obey

Allah and shun the Devil. This level is higher than the previous one.

Fear Of Being Deprived Of The Beatific Presence And Vision Of Allah [Liqa' Allah] (۳

This is fear of losing the attention and affection of Allah. There is no doubt that this level is higher than the previous two levels and is especially reserved for the elect ones of the divine presence and people whose companionship is very high and pay no attention to the reward and retribution of the hereafter; but perceive and pursue things which are higher.

In order to clarify this level and make our minds perceive it, it is necessary to cite an example:

Imagine that we have been invited by the leader of the Islamic revolution and a reception has been arranged for us. It is likely for a number of the people who have been invited to be worried of missing the food once they delay. Some say to themselves that today is a festival and it has been resolved that the leader will offer presents. Their fear is that they will miss the gifts if they arrive late [at the reception]. The ambition of this group is higher than that of the previous one. It is not important whether they remain hungry or not, but what is important is receiving a present from the hands of the leader!

The third group consists of people who only value and cherish visiting the leader and nothing else. That the leader of the Islamic revolution will cast a glance at them and

smile out of pleasure and happiness at them

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is very valuable for them and it is no longer necessary for them to be given a coin or .not

These levels of love and affection which exist among the people as a result of the differences in motivation and knowledge are coincidentally similar to fear of the divine .presence

In a hadith, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) cites these three levels in regard to worship and :servitude to Allah, the Exalted, stating

A group of men worship Allah as a result of fear; the worship of this category of" people is that of slaves. Another party prays to Allah as a result of ardor for divine reward and profit; the worship of this sect is that of wage-takers. And another group venerates Allah as a result of love and adoration for Allah; this is the worship of the (free and is the highest worship."(۱

The dread of a person who fears Allah is sometimes apprehension of hell in such a way that if the punishment of hell is gotten rid of, they are no longer worried. Of course, this stage is very worthy in comparison to infidelity and disbelief and is a product of belief in Allah, the Day of Resurrection and faith in the fact that Allah will punish sinful and disobedient servants. The ambition of a person who has achieved this level is low and is like slaves who work as a result of fear of their master's .punishment

Some people's fear of Allah is a result of their foreboding that they will

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۰, p. ۲۳۶ -۱

be deprived of the divine blessings of the eternal Garden of bliss. Even if divine

retribution is out of consideration, they apprehend being expropriated of the divine favors of Allah. Vis-à-vis, those two groups are a sect which, even if heaven and hell were not existent, they worry about being the object of indifference and disregard by Allah. The Qur'an mentions Allah's disregard to the disbelievers as one of the greatest :divine retributions

... وَلاَ يُكَلِّمُهُم اللهُ وَلاَ يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَهِ...

and Allah will not speak to them, nor will He look upon them on the Day of ... " (Resurrection..."(١

For a person who is conscious [and perceptive], Allah's contempt is worse than His retribution. Worse than any punishment for a man is to go visiting his friend, father or teacher after a long period of time only to be confronted by their disregard and .indifference

A question is asked here that why were the Infallible Imams ('a) also afraid of Allah? They were infallible and the control of heaven and hell was at their disposal, why were ?they afraid of Allah and how compatible is this fear with the station of infallibility

A brief answer is that infallibility connotes quitting sins and abstaining from what is forbidden and that does not mean that the good pleasure of Allah too is allotted to the Infallible. An Infallible is a person who does not sin and does not go to hell, but where is it explicitly stated that he is the object

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١- Surat Al 'Imran ٣:٧٧.

of Allah's attention and love? Dread of being expropriated of Allah's grace and His .good pleasure is higher than fear of divine retribution

An elaborate and real response to this query is beyond the reach of our understanding, because we cannot conceive the station of the Prophet's (S) Pure Household and [we cannot] perceive what spiritual states they had and what they

.were doing and how their conditions were

Yes, with reliance on the evidence that exists and in comparison with our own states, in brief and to the extent of our comprehension, we perceive a very meager fraction .of their states but the reality of the matter is not apparent to us and is not explicable

The Simultaneous Appearance of Opposing and Conflicting States

With regard to the previous topics, it can be gathered that once man's soul becomes complete, it can have different states simultaneously—such as [concurrent] pleasure .and displeasure

Our capacity is limited and we cannot manage to gather numerous transcendental states at the level of perfection. Therefore, the collection of sorrows and joys gives rise to a medium and intermediate inner state in us. But once man becomes more perfect, he can cause to appear in himself two or more conflicting spiritual states, .what is more at the level of perfection

Fear and hope, with regard to their special factors, appear in the soul and if the totality of causes are together taken into consideration, it is possible for them to give .rise to a new transcendental state as a result of their actions and reactions

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But if regard is paid to every factor, from the perspective that it is a source and fountainhead of a specific inner state, its only fruit is that very spiritual state. For instance, if we concentrate on the origin of fear, only dread appears in our souls and once we focus on the source of security, the feeling of security and peace appears in .our souls

People whose souls have become complete and are in firm control of their inner states and spiritual conditions become full of tears once they conceive the divine retribution and/or reflect upon the possibility of being deprived of the good pleasure of Allah and at that very moment perceive the grace, mercy and forgiveness of Allah and a state of happiness and joyousness appears in them. That is to say, with regard

to the causes of fear and security, it is feasible for them to concurrently emanate two .inner states in themselves

With regard to these issues, it is possible to have a weak awareness and knowledge in relation to the holy existence of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Infallible Imams ('a) in the form of a subtle station 'union of perfections' [jam' al-jam'i] and that those strong souls can synchronically be the manifestation of all the beautiful Names and Attributes of Allah. They pay heed to the mercy of Allah and become happy and joyous .and hope appears in them

On the other hand, they pay heed to the harsh divine retribution and

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punishment, and an inner state of fear and dread appears in them. But in regard to the physical [or bodily] appearance and emergence of spiritual states, whichever gains predominance over the other becomes conspicuous and evident because the body of man lacks the capability of manifesting those two inner states in a complete way. If fear prevails, tears flow and once the feeling of hope and joy predominates, the lips fall into a smile; of course, manifesting these inner states is at their free .disposal

With regard to the question of why the Infallibles paid heed to divine retribution in order to give rise to the inner state of fear in themselves despite that they knew they had not committed any sin and would never at all commit any sin, in addition to that, Allah has placed heaven and hell at their free disposal. Therefore, what motivation do they have for paying heed to the cause of fear? We have previously provided a .response to this query but now we will give another answer

The sum of capabilities and inner states which exist in man ought to be the manifestation of devotional servitude to Allah and to be expended in His way. Man's being is a mixture of material and transcendental elements and states; there is in his natural disposition fear and displeasure and security and pleasure, and joy and .gratification, too

Allah has granted these spiritual and transcendental states to all human beings in order for them to use them along His

path. They ought to be happy and laugh for the good pleasure of Allah; that is to say, his joyousness has to be related to Allah in some way. He ought to be glad for the reason that he has been an object of Allah's mercy not because he is deriving pleasure [for] himself.

It has been narrated in some hadiths that the Shi'ahs will be guests of the Prophet (S) and his Ahl al-bayt ('a) and sit at their table partaking of their food. But still is the gratification which the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) derive the same as that which we derive [from it]? It has been recorded in a verse in the Qur'an that:

وَلَحْمِ طَيْرٍ مِمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ

"And the flesh of fowl such as they desire."(۱)

Is the pleasure which the Noble Prophet derives from the fowls of paradise the same as that which we derive?

Of course, the two immeasurable pleasures are different. The Noble Prophet (S) derives pleasure from the perspective that it is acceptable to Allah. In any case, the level of derivation of pleasure is related to the standard of knowledge and affection and love of an individual to Allah.

This very contrast can be made in relation to the fear of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) with the dread of the rest [of people]; even if they fear the fire of hell but still their dread emanates from their perception that it is a sign of Allah's wrath. They perceive it as

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۱- Surat al-Waqi'ah ۵۶:۲۱.

a sign that their Beloved has no love for them; Allah's wrath and separation and parting from Him is unbearable for them, it is for this reason that they are deeply .worried and anxious

Lesson ۱۳: The Insignificance and Minuteness of the World and the Importance of Perceiving the Hereafter

The Differences of Perception and Conduct between an Intelligent and an Unintelligent Person

The previous discourse was concerned with the fact that if man commits sin and becomes regretful and fearful afterwards, Allah grants him forgiveness as a result of that regret and anxiety. It is likely to falsely imagine that every person who commits sin and repents afterwards will be forgiven and this in itself gives birth to more sin and contamination. In order to put an end to this false illusion, the Noble Prophet states that a smart and clever person is one who is always contemplating about the best way of making use of his life and performing commendable works. He tramples the carnal desires of the soul underfoot and does not act according to the dictates of his :appetitive heart, which consequently leads to getting afflicted by negligence

O Abu Dharr! Smart and wise is a man who disciplines his soul and strives for the life" after death and stupid is a person who follows his soul and its carnal cravings and in ".spite of that has hope in Allah

Man has an intellect and an appetitive soul; sometimes his intellect is triumphant over his craving soul and at other times the longing heart is victorious over his reason. Both :types have been portrayed in this section

At times, the soul becomes weak and its yearnings

p: ۱۶۲

do not have [any] influence on the intellect. This is in regard to a sagacious man who is on the path of edification of character and unceasingly reflects upon the everlasting life after death. In contrast, from time to time the soul and its carnal desires triumph over reason and man becomes weak in the face of the appetitive soul and cannot

.[resist the animal instincts [of the flesh

This interpretation is based on the copy of “Bihar al-Anwar” in which has been recorded “whoever debases his soul”, [man dana nafsah] that is to say wise is a man whose carnal desires have become weak but the other copies have recorded .[“whoever disciplines his soul” [man adabba nafsah

Perhaps, the second expression is better than the first, and in this case the denotation of the sentence will be thus: wise is a person who endeavors to discipline his soul. In other words, a sagacious man undertakes edification of character and does not indulge his soul in its every whim and desire. Such a person can think rationally and close his eyes to the marginal material world and set them on the infinite horizon and the perpetuity of the final abode and stop them from short-sightedness and limited .perceptions. He discharges his works for the everlasting life after the Resurrection

From the Islamic point of view, this kind of thinking is intelligent and this type of person is clever, because he meditates about the destination and conceives the infinite cosmos of

the hereafter in place of this finite world. By contrasting the transient pleasures of the world with the permanent blessings of the eternal abode, a sagacious man prefers .the second

Myopic people think of nothing but short-term pleasures and prefer them over the imperishable gratifications of the afterworld. They have handed over the authority of the intellect to the appetitive soul and meekly put themselves at the disposal of the stomach and passion; and in the words of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam ‘Ali :((‘a

All too often, the intellect and wisdom are captives and hostages of the carnal soul“ (and desires of the flesh which reign over them.”(۱

Such a person follows the appetitive soul and hopes to be companions with the saints

Trustworthiness and Humility

point

Previous to this, the discussion was concerned with the two inner qualities of fear and sorrow and that two commendable and desirable transcendental states appear as a result of them but for the reason that some perfections and spiritual sates are likely to be divested of man, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

“O Abu Dharr! The first attribute that will be divested of this ummah (Islamic Community) is dependability and humility, to the extent that a humble individual will not be seen.”

In this statement, the Noble Prophet (S) has mentioned two eminent ethical qualities. One of those two values is trustworthiness, which is a social ethical attribute, and plays a pivotal role in establishing healthy social relationships and without which it is impossible to found a

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۱- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۱۸۲, wisdom [hikmat] ۲۰۲, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

sound community, because the bedrock of social relationships is reciprocal trust.

In this section, the Noble Prophet (S) warns Abu Dharr that after his departure, a good and acclaimed attribute will be removed from the Islamic community the highest and first of which is reliability and modesty.

The community of the Noble Prophet of Islam (S), as a well-trained community, had two inimitable distinctions over the rest of the nations; the first quality was concerned with social relationships among themselves and with the other nations. The second characteristic was connected with the spiritual states and morals and the formation of the individual personality of the community. It was outstanding both from the point of

view of individual and spiritual personality and from the social perspective. This trait was attained as a result of the prolonged instructions sanctioned by Allah and .(executed by the Noble Prophet (S

The Islamic community was like a garden of greenery in blossom and trees bearing fruit in the hands of an illustrious gardener such as the Noble Prophet (S). Now once this garden meets with misfortune, the effects of that calamity will become apparent .and it will head towards ruin and extinction

Instructed by the Noble Prophet (S), a community which was superlative from the aspect of individual and social qualities had been met with catastrophe and the greenery turned to yellow leaves after the departure of the Noble Prophet (S). The first misfortune to befall the Islamic community was that the people became hard-hearted and

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forfeited humility and tender-heartedness, to the extent that they never submitted to right, and positive and invaluable attributes could never impress themselves upon their hearts. Every one of them was a cold and cruel man whose heart could never be moved by the right word and he never got soft-hearted and tearful where it was .appropriate to do that

The second calamity in connection to their social relations came into being when dependability and right conduct lost their weight; they were not truthful and honest with each other, and used to betray each other. This is a warning bell for the community: once these two individual and social afflictions come to appearance in a .community, that individual and community will be propelled into decline

This value is not confined to Islam and/or the Muslims only. Before the advent of Islam, all the people used to know that truthfulness and trustworthiness are good and .treachery in regard to people's property and possessions is not commendable

a) The Function of Trustworthiness

The greatest factor which rendered the Noble Prophet (S) successful not only among the Arabs, but amidst all the inhabitants of the world, was that he was a trustworthy man [right] before the Prophetic mission. The people used to acknowledge him as a dependable man and used to call him, 'Muhammad the Trustworthy' [Muhammad-i amin]. And this very trait became a cause of the people's inclination to him, because reliability also calls for telling the truth. A man who betrays people with regard to their property cannot tell the

truth. A lot of people conceded his assertion that he was the Prophet (S) because he .never used to tell any lies

As has been mentioned previously, a value such as dependability is conceived by the intellect, and if there had not been the prophetic mission and the divine call, the people would still perceive it but Islam endorsed this command of the intellect and :stated

إِنَّ اللهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الاَمَانَاتِ إِلَى أَهْلِهَا...

(Surely, Allah commands you to make over trusts to their owners..."(۱)"

Trustworthiness is one of the needs of life and if people do not abide by it and do not become dependable, the system breaks up and no man trusts another any longer for the reason that the bedrock and foundation of social life is mutual trust. (Reliability in speech is a necessity of telling the truth and dependability in works is a requirement of correct conduct and its value derives independently from the intellect and does not stand in need of deductive reasoning and in this regard Islamic admonitions have the aspect of instruction, the divine Islamic law [shar'] countersigns what reason has (.perceived and advises mankind to follow it

Reliability is not only pertinent to safeguarding the personal properties of other people but caring about community property and the public funds of the Islamic government are also instances of trustworthiness. The streets, water and the trees

and everything else belonging to the society is considered as property [entrusted to us for safeguarding].

Apart from that, taking

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١- Surat al-Nisa' ۴:۵٨.

good care of public assets is higher for the reason that if someone commits treachery with regard to the holdings of an individual, it is only to one person that he is indebted but once he is traitorous to assets of the community and the funds of the Islamic society, he has betrayed all the Muslims. If that driver who is in charge of a government car is not honest and does not take good care of that car, he has committed treachery against all the people. He has committed treachery once he uses public means for personal purposes.

The Glorious Qur'an introduces the Islamic community as loyal and faithful to their promises:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُون

"And those who are keepers of their trusts and covenants."(١)

At another point, it orders them to return the trusts to their owners:

إِنَّ اللهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الاَمَانَاتِ إِلَى أَهْلِهَا...

"Surely Allah commands you to make over trusts to their owners..."(٢)

The reason for the injunction about dependability is because once the value of reliability is divested of the society, the people double-cross each other and they abuse each other's rights and consequently the social links and bonds which are the bedrock of reciprocal trust disintegrate and this is itself a beginning of disregard for invaluable attributes and human qualities.

b) The Function of Humility

point

If the people were to be humble and flexible in the face of right, they would not be indifferent and would show reaction to the incidents and occurrences that take place in society. Such

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۱- Surat al-Mu'minun ۲۳:۸.
۲- Surat al-Nisa' ۴:۵۸.

a people respond to the call and guidance of the prophets and tremble once they are warned [about hell] and become lively and happy when given glad tidings [about the eternal Garden of bliss]. They become angry and tearful when they see someone being oppressed and get gladdened at seeing the right of someone being discharged. Such people are soft-hearted and humble in the face of right and have opened their breasts to accept what is true.

In contrast to them, stony-hearted people are apathetic and unexcited in the face of truths which are presented to them and to incidents and happenings taking place around them because their hearts do not have the preparedness to accept the truth and naturally they never used to respond positively to the call of the prophets and never used to be submissive in the face of right. They only think and care about themselves and their animal desires.

The Glorious Qur'an mentions two kinds of the people of the Book: the first kind is the tribe of Israel who are the bitterest enemies of Islam and the believers:

... ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِکَ فَهِیَ کَالْحِجَارَهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ قَسْوَهً وَإِنَّ مِن الْحِجَارَهِ لَمَا يتفجرُ منه الانهار وإنَّ منها يَشَّقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءِ...

"...Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks from which

streams burst forth, and surely there are some of them which split asunder so water (issues out of them…"(۱)

Water springs from a rock but the Jews are so

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۱- Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۷۴.

hard-hearted that never do their hearts break down so as to let tears flow and this tribe is a pig-headed enemy of the believers.

In contrast to this group, the Glorious Qur'an states with regard to the other group of the people of the Book called the Christians, who are friendly and kind to the believers:

... وَلَتَجِدَنَّ أَقْرَبَهُمْ مَوَدَّةً لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ قَالُوا اِنَّا نَصارى ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِّيسِينَ وَرُهْبَانًا وَأَنَّهُمْ لاَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ

"…Certainly you will find the most violent of people in enmity for those who believe (to be) the Jews and those who are polytheists, and you will certainly find the nearest in friendship to those who believe (to be) those who say, 'We are Christians'; this is because there are priests and monks among them and because they do not behave (proudly."(۱)

In continuation of this verse, Allah sates:

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَى أَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِن الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوا مِن الْحَقِّ...

"And when they hear what has been revealed to the Apostle, you will see their eyes (overflowing with tears on account of the truth that they recognize…"(۲)

This characteristic of flexibility and tenderness in the face of right became the reason of their believing, because their hearts were open to the truth. In contrast to them, the hard-hearted Jews never used to believe. It is for this reason that we see in history that a great deal of Christians became Muslims and became pure and sincere believers, in contrast to a tiny number of Jews.

.Surat al-Ma'idah ۵:۸۲ -۱

.Surat al-Ma'idah ۵:۸۳ -۲

The Noble Prophet states that a day will come when no humble man will be found and the notion of humility and modesty will become meaningless. Some of the people who fancied themselves to be informed Islamists used to say that Islam does not approve of abjectness and lowliness, even in the presence of Allah man ought not to feel abject! Melancholy, crying and humility are worthless for such kind of people! This is in .spite of the Glorious Qur'an introducing the believers as humble

One of the Islamic scholars was accused of deviating from the right path because every time that the Glorious Qur'an was recited in his presence, he used to break down and cry. They used to conjecture that only in mourning ceremonies and misfortunes should people cry and shedding tears at the time of recitation of the Qur'an is an innovated practice in Religion. That is to say that this practice had so been abandoned and forsaken that if a person did it, he would get accused of .deviation and innovation in religion

Humility denotes a feeling of lowliness, abasement and modesty which occurs in the heart and its reflection manifests itself in the organs and limbs of man. The deceased Raghib Isfahani says, "Humility connotes a feeling of weakness and abasement and its most prevalent application is where its manifestations appear in the organs and ".limbs of man

:For instance, in the Glorious Qur'an humility has been used in these cases

A) In speech

"On that Day they shall

follow the inviter, there is no crookedness on him, and the voices shall be low before the Beneficent God so that you shall not hear aught but a soft sound."(1)

B) In the eyes

"Their eyes cast down, going forth from their graves as if they were scattered locusts."(2)

C) In the face

"Some faces on that Day shall be downcast."(3)

D) In prostration

"And they fall down on their faces weeping, and it adds to their humility."(4)

E) In supplication and prayer

"Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers."(5)

F) In the heart

"Has not the time come for those who believe that their hearts should not be humble for the remembrance of Allah and what has come down of the truth?"(6)

Discourse concerning every one of the aforementioned instances calls for a lot of time and presently there is no opportunity of engaging in them now. In brief, it has become clear that humble is a man in whose conduct modesty, wisdom and intelligence appear without pride and boastfulness, like an abject slave he ought to put to death the spirit of egotism and pride because self-conceit and arrogance prevent man from modesty and humility and is without doubt a clear instance of the proud and rebellious Devil:

فَسَجَدَ المَلاَئِكَهُ كُلَّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ * اِلاَّ اِبْلِيسَ أَبَى أَنْ يَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ

So the angels made obeisance, all of them together, but Iblis (did it not); he refused“ (to be with those who made obeisance.”(7)

:While explicating this verse, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states

Pride and egotism overcame him and he prided himself on his creation over that of“ Adam, and became bigoted on account of

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۱- Surat Ta Ha ۲۰:۱۰۸.

۲- Surat al-Qamar ۵۴:۷.

۳- Surat al-Ghashiyah ۸۸:۲.

۴- Surat al-Isra’ (or Bani Isra’il) ۱۷:۱۰۹.

۵- Surat al-Mu’minun ۲۳:۱-۲.

۶- Surat al-Hadid ۵۷:۱۶.

۷- Surat al-Hijr ۱۵:۳۰-۳۱.

his origin (that he was created from the fire) and audaciously disobeyed Allah. Therefore, this enemy of Allah is the leader of the arrogant and the standard-bearer of the disobedient, who founded the prejudice and disputed with Allah over the dress of honor and greatness (which is specially reserved for Allah) and wore the garment of glory and honor, for which he was not worthy, and divested his body of the dress of ”.lowliness and humility

:In continuation, he states

Take lesson from what Allah did to Satan, whose countless acts of worship and“ unceasing endeavors were rendered null and void, in spite of worshiping Allah for six thousand years of which it is not clear whether their reckoning is of this world or of the hereafter. All this was a consequence of his momentary pride and disobedience. Therefore, is there any proud and rebellious man who remains safe from the

retribution of Allah after Satan? Allah, the Exalted, will never make a slave, who has committed a sin for which an angel was expelled from the Garden of bliss, enter therein. Verily, the judgment of Allah is equal for the dwellers of the skies and the ".inhabitants of the earth

It is important to mention this point that the fountainhead and cause of losing humility and of hard-heartedness and betrayal of people's trusts is love of the world. Love of the world robs man of the grace for humility, crying and supplication and it is as a result of love of the

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world that man gets polluted by doubt, and finally gets addicted to committing forbidden acts and insists on perpetrating great sins. Therefore, we are compelled to restrain the heart from falling in love with the world and making it its goal and we .ought to prevent it from being addicted to dubious and forbidden acts

If we notice that values and virtues are departing from society day by day and social corruption is gradually on the increase, it is because of man's inclination to materialism; this love and fondness of the world prepares the ground for the .perpetration of any sin imaginable

People do not get sad over the sins which they commit but once a worldly loss is inflicted upon them, they become sorrowful. This is as a result of love and affection for the world. If an individual sets their heart on the hereafter and fixes it as their final destination, he makes use of everything to secure his hereafter. If he is rich, he makes use of his wealth to secure his afterworld. If he is not well-to-do, he makes use of patience and submission to acquire the eternal Garden of bliss. If he is affluent, he spends his money in the way of Allah and if he is not wealthy, he helps people in other .ways

Once man's love for this world increases, he derives benefit from the permitted pleasures to the extent that he can, and if he got less than he wanted, he turns his

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attention on dubious acts and tries to exonerate himself by seeking the help of religious edicts which have been passed by the religious jurisprudent. Today, he justifies a kind of illegal profit and tomorrow he commits a categorically and explicitly forbidden act and he drifts down to the extent that he does not dread committing any .kind of sin, no matter how big

It is natural that the heart of such a person has become hard, and the state of humility will be divested of him. Once love of the world becomes imbedded in man's heart, he commits treachery with regard to the possessions of other people and makes use of them for personal benefit. Therefore, what causes the hardness of heart is sin, .obsession with material things and pleasures of the flesh

Now, in order to remedy this pain, we ought to find its causes, we must see why this tree has gotten dry and what poisonous food has been given to it so as to cause it to dry. In order for the tree of man's life to remain safe and sound from plagues, healthy food ought to be given to it and stop it from following animal instincts and passions .because they give birth to hard-heartedness and stone-heartedness

In order to root out hardness of heart and wipe out sin, diseases which plague the heart have to be made known to man and the fountainhead of all the blights which result in man's separation from Allah and spirituality is

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love of the world. With different expressions, the Gracious Qur'an cautions man against the world and warns him about its consequences. Sometimes, in one sermon of the "Nahj al-Balaghah", the world had been reproached several times and Imam 'Ali ('a) always cautions his companions against the world, because His Holiness knows that the root cause of all pains is love of the world. While there is room for love .of the world, no virtue and no perfection remains stable for man

It is possible for man to make effort for many years and acquire virtues, but wipe all

of them out with one deadly poison. It is because of this that the Qur'an, the Noble Prophet (S) and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) used different reasons [and arguments] to advise men to disincline from the world. Of course, abstaining from the world does not mean quitting work and giving up [the acquisition of] knowledge and abolishing technology; on the contrary, it connotes not falling in love with the world and its alluring objects .and not chasing the passions

In one word, abstinence from the world denotes not giving primacy to the world and making use of it as a means of attaining the world. In this case, all of man's efforts and even the acquisition of wealth and possessions acquire an eschatological bearing for the reason that striving for the hereafter and seeking the world are related to the motivation and aim of man. For example, if man's motive for marrying

is only to satisfy his passions, this is called libertinism [and is a kind of seeking the world and a type of materialism]. He only absorbs himself with gratifying his animal .passions and cravings of the flesh

All too often, it makes no difference for him whether he satisfies his sensual desires in a permissible or forbidden way. On the contrary, if his incentive in marrying is to obey Allah because it is He who has demanded that man founds a household, otherwise he would not have done so even if it was full of pleasure. But he marries for the good .pleasure of Allah, even if he may be besieged by thousands of problems

If you see that nowadays the foundations of family life have been enfeebled in the west, it is because they merely think about deriving pleasure and their sexual gratification is better secured by illicit means than by marriage; therefore, they do not confine themselves to the shackles of family life. When they see that the necessity of marriage is perseverance of hardships and problems, they quit it; but the Islamic .society is not like this

Until Islamic values preside, they patiently forebear the problems of family life, because Allah's wish is thus. Of course, Allah too has placed pleasures in this action

(He has placed innate and natural pleasures in spouses and children) but in any case, it has problems too. Therefore, if a person derives benefit from the pleasures of the world for the good

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pleasure of Allah, not only is his action acceptable, but his work is meant for the hereafter, not worldliness. Worldliness [or materialism] takes place when primacy is accorded to pleasures.

The Insignificance and Minuteness of the World in Allah's View

To explain the frivolity of the world and reproach materialism, the Noble Prophet (S) states in the following sentences:

"O Abu Dharr! I swear upon Allah in whose hands lies Muhammad's soul [or life] that if the world had the value of one fly's wing and mosquito's wing before Allah, He would not have given even one drop of water to an infidel."

Love of the world is a misfortune which more or less affects all of us. If we are presently not affected by it, there is [still] the probability of our getting afflicted by it in the future. It is therefore worthwhile to pay more attention to this explication of the Noble Prophet (S) and try to derive benefit from it for the edification of souls [and characters].

Pleasures of the flesh are the criterion of value for us, therefore we accord value to whatever pleases us more and that is more desirable for us. But Islam introduces another standard and that is conformity with the wish of Allah; that is to say, a thing has value once it is valuable before Allah.

The Noble Prophet (S) swears that if this world, with all its expansiveness and largeness and inclusive of all its gratifications, for which lives are lost and wasted, had the value of a fly's wing before Allah,

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He would not have given a drop of it to an infidel. If oceans and seas had price before Allah, an infidel would not derive benefit from it and He would only grant its benefits to His saints [awliya'] ('a). (Of course, the purport of infidel in this saying is one who is inimical and hostile to the religion and does not yield to right otherwise the weak, oppressed and coerced unbeliever has another reckoning.) The reason why you see the Muslim and infidel are equal in the derivation of pleasure from the world is .because it has no essential value and is a means of trial

:Allah states in the Qur'an

إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ ...

(Your possessions and your children are only a trial..."(١"

:Elsewhere, He states

أَلْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَهُ الْحَيوهِ الدُّنْيا وَالْبَاقِيات الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ أَمَلاً

Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of this world; and the ever abiding,"
(the good works, are better with your Lord in reward and are better in expectation."(٢

In another verse, in regard to the destructibleness of the world and the :indestructibleness of what is before Allah, He states

مَا عِنْدَ كُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللهِ بَاقٍ...

(What is with you passes away and what is with Allah is enduring..."(٣"

Man imagines that the things of this world have value, and whoever has more is :regarded as important; in expounding this false illusion, the Glorious Qur'an states

فَأَمَّا الإِنْسَانُ إِذَا مَا ابْتَلاهُ رَبُّهُ فَأَكْرَمَهُ وَنَعَّمَهُ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّى أَكْرَمَنِ * وَأَمَّا إِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ

.Surat al-Taghabun ٦٤:١٥ -١

.Surat al-Kahf ۱۸:۴۶ -۲
.Surat al-Nahl ۱۶:۹۶ -۳

فَقَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقَهُ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّى أَهَانَنِ

And as for man, when his Lord tries him, then treats him with honor and makes him" lead an easy life, he says, 'My Lord honors me; but when He tries him (differently), then straightens to him the means of subsistence, he says, 'My Lord has disgraced (me'."(۱

The truth is that the world is a means of trials and man is an object of Allah's testing, whether he is granted of the blessings of this world or deprived of them. Neither is derivation of benefit from the world a sign of superiority nor is poverty and destitution an indication of lowliness. Therefore, because the world is worthless in Allah's point of view, He does not deprive an unbeliever of its blessings. In contrast, the Garden of :eternal bliss and its graces have value before Allah; that is why He deprives man of it

وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّهِ أَنْ أَفِيضُوا عَلَيْنَا مِن الْمَاءِ أَوْ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمْ اللهُ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللهَ حَرَّمَهُمَا عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ

And the inmates of the Fire shall call out to the dwellers of the Garden, saying, 'Pour" on us some water or that of which Allah has given you.' They shall say, 'Surely He has (prohibited them both to the unbelievers'."(۲

Heaven and its graces have such value that the infidels do not merit deriving benefit from them and in truth this primary and real worth has been especially reserved for the saints [awliya'] of Allah. In contrast, the world has

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.Surat al-Fajr ۸۹:۱۵-۱۶ -۱
.Surat al-A'raf ۷:۵۰ -۲

no value for Allah, the reason of which an unbeliever derives benefit from it too and all too often they procure more gain from it than the rest of the people and better make use of the facilities of this world; of course, the more they gather gain from it, the

more it adds to their retribution because the unbelievers utilize those graces on the .path of disobedience and deviation from right

What is surprising is that in explaining the insignificance and irrelevance of this world, the Noble Prophet (S) swears upon Allah. It becomes clear that accepting this issue is very hard for ordinary people; how is it possible for the world not to have the value of a fly's wing with all its expansiveness, resources, facilities and innumerable pleasures which are enjoyable to man! The reason for this is because our awareness of the .realities of the world is little and our inner eye is myopic

We have made preoccupation with the world the cornerstone of our lives and have given primacy to the world, heedless of the fact that in the divine perspective and the Qur'anic point of view, the world lacks value and it has subjective value [or metaphorical interpretation] only to the extent of being an instrument. Its true value belongs to its excellences and beauties which result in man's prosperity and attainment of the good pleasure of Allah. Its true value is found in that which results in proximity to Allah which is that same

goal for which man has been created and it has been requested of him to make use of .every means and ways of arriving at it

Lesson ۱۴: Extolling Pursuit of the Hereafter, Asceticism and Spiritual Discernment in Religion and Reproaching Materialism

point

Parts of this hadith are concerned with reproaching the world, sections of which have been explained and now we shall study the other part. As has been mentioned frequently, censure of this world does not mean that man ought to give up work and earning and endeavor in the various aspects of social life and not to pursue wealth and possessions; on the contrary, criticism [of the world] denotes not getting attached to it and not setting it as a goal. In reality, this is the intention and motivation which gives direction to man's works and becomes the cause of that work being considered

.as a commendable or abhorred and foul act

According to the verses of the Noble Qur’an, man arrives at the hereafter by means of the world and the world is a preparatory field for the next world. Therefore, man ought to work and make effort. If his endeavors and worldly activities are meant for the good pleasure of Allah, he attains prosperity and if his activities are intended for acquiring the world and its pleasures, he will be impelled to commit sin whether he .likes or not, and that is the path leading to the eternal fire and divine retribution

Reproaching Materialism and Elucidating the Highness of Faith

In order to stop the believers from getting enamored with the world and its pleasures, ,like the medical officers

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try by various means to caution the patients from things which are harmful to them, the saints [awliya’] of Allah too have tried with different elucidations to make the world abhorred in the believer’s point of view, one of those explanations is a saying :which will be pointed at in this discourse

O Abu Dharr! The world and all that is in it has been cursed, except that which is a“ ”.means of attaining Allah’s pleasure

It is evident from the contents of this hadith that the curse which has been cast on the blessings of the world has not been directed at things like the ground, trees and the sky because a thing which can be a means of attaining the good pleasure of Allah is not only blessed but is also desirable; therefore, the curse has been cast on setting it as a goal and giving primacy to the world, for the reason that the creation of the world and its blessings are meant to make it a channel in the direction of man’s proximity to Allah. The world has been placed at the disposal of the man so that he may reach .Allah by means of it

Now, if this man perceives the world as means of arriving at Allah, the mercy of Allah will always descend upon him because he is pursuing the [right] goal and is proceeding

in the correct direction. An intelligent man never gets heedless of the goal and always sets his eyes on the

destination and selects the path which makes him draw nigh to the destination. In other than this case, the merciful look of Allah is withdrawn from man because he has turned his heels and back against his goal and the aim of the world's creation. Instead of trudging the course of prosperity, he has traversed the course of misery and .wretchedness

A companion of one of the slaves was sad because of the largeness of his income and occupation. The Imam ('a) met him and asked, "Why are you unhappy?" The companion answered, "Your Highness, my wealth has increased, [and] I have become a victim of the world." The Imam asked, "Why do you go after wealth and the acquisition of possessions?" The companion answered, "In order for me and my children not to be a burden to other people and so that I may manage to help my believing brothers." His Holiness the Imam stated, "This is otherworldliness and is not materialism, and there is no need to be worried about it. You ought to be worried when you get enamored with the gratifications of the world and be sad once you ".covet the world

There is nothing more abhorred by Allah than the world. He created it and then" turned it upside down and cut off the look of compassion and will not glance upon it till ".the Day of Resurrection

The purport of this saying has been explained in a lot of ethical books by a large number

of the great men of letters, especially the deceased Imam Khomeini, and dependence has been laid on it. (It is very strange that for people of mystical knowledge, this very).expression is enough to make them not inclined to the world in all their lives

There is no doubt that Allah, the Exalted, loves all his creatures and they are the effects of the beautiful Names and Attributes of Allah and from the viewpoint that the whole world is a manifestation of the perfect Attributes and Names of Allah, he pays attention to them and grants them grace until the Day of Resurrection. Allah does not pay attention to the world from the perspective that it is considered independent of him and primacy is given to it. Now, this question arises as to what thing this divine grace and loving look of Allah is attached; in explaining this point, His Holiness ('a) :states

".Allah loves nothing more than faith and abstaining from the forbidden acts"

The most beloved thing before Allah in the first place is faith and second is fear of Allah and quitting forbidden acts. It can be gathered from this hadith that quitting sins is more desirable than performing obligatory actions, even if it can be said that discharging obligatory actions is considered as a level of faith, for the reason that faith consists of both acts of the heart [or inward acts] and apparent [or outward] acts which are performed by means of the limbs and members of the

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body. Anything in the world that is a means of attaining faith and abstaining from sins is beloved in the sight of Allah. Therefore, Allah has strongly recommended worldly :affairs for the reason that man attains piety and proximity to Allah by means of them

,Imam al-Sadiq ('a) narrates that the Noble Prophet (S) stated

(Nine tenths of worship is in trade and work."(۱"

,In another hadith, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states

A person who marries has procured half of his religion, therefore let him enjoin piety" (in the other half."(۲

,Or in another hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states

(In Islam, there is no foundation more beloved than marriage."(۳"

There is no doubt that these are affairs of the world but for the reason that they become channels for worship and devotional servitude to Allah and forsaking sins, .they are beloved by Allah

The Need for Loving the Hereafter

O Abu Dharr! Allah, the Exalted and Blessed, inspired revelation to my brother Jesus“ [‘Isa]: O Jesus [‘Isa], do not treasure the world, because I do not love it. Take pleasure ”.in the hereafter since it is the abode of the last world

The Noble Prophet (S) quotes the saying of Prophet Jesus (‘a) that Allah inspired revelation that He did not love the world and Prophet Jesus too ought not to be friends with it. It is natural that the Noble Prophet [of Islam] (S) is an enemy of the world too, because the criteria for the friendship and enmity of the Infallibles (‘a) with a person or thing

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۸۵, p. ۳۱۹, hadith ۲ -۱

.Ibid., vol. ۱۰۳, p. ۲۱۹, hadith ۱۴ -۲

.Ibid., p. ۲۲۲, hadith ۴۰ -۳

is friendship and enmity with Allah. It is natural that the best role model for the believers and the followers of right in encountering the world is the conduct or way of .life of the Prophets (S) and the Infallibles

:With regard to the Noble Prophet’s (S) perception of the world, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states

The Holy Prophet treated this world disdainfully and regarded it low. He held it“ contemptible and hated it. He realized that Allah kept it away from him with intention and spread it out for others by way of contempt. Therefore, he remained away from it by his heart, banished its recollection from his mind and wished that its attraction should remain hidden from his eyes so that he should acquire any clothing from it, or hope for staying in it. He conveyed from Allah the pleas (against committing sins), counseled his people as an admonisher (against divine chastisement) and called

((people) towards paradise as a conveyor of good tidings."(1)

This was despite that the Noble Prophet (S) had the jurisdiction of making use of all the material blessings of the world and according to his own statement, all the treasures of the world were presented to him but he did not accept them:

"O Abu Dharr! Gabriel brought the treasures of the world on black and white mules and said, 'O Muhammad! These are the treasures of the world and taking possession of them in the world will not decrease your share before Allah.'"

That the Noble Prophet (S) states

۱- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۳۳۶, sermon [khutbah] ۱۰۸, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

that Gabriel came to him with the treasures of the world mounted on black and white mules is probably an illusion that the world is intertwined with pleasure and pain and good and evil. No person will be found who only has pain and sorrow in his life and derives no pleasure and vice versa no individual will be found who only derives gratification in life and/or not encounter any pain and sorrow. In reality, beside every pain there is pleasure and beside every pleasure there is pain, and both of them are means of trial for man:

... وَنَبْلُوكُمْ بِالْشَرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً...

"...We have made you entangled in good and bad so that we may try you..."(1)

The other point is that Gabriel says to the Noble Prophet (S) that if you make use of all the treasures of the world, nothing of your share of the hereafter will be decreased. One of the defects of material pleasures is that the more man derives pleasure from them, the more the possibility of his getting deprived of the gratifications of the next world. But the saints [awliya'] of Allah and the prophets ('a) are not like this; it is for this reason that Gabriel says that no share of the Noble Prophet (S) will be reduced in exchange for your making use of all the treasures of the world.

:In response, the Noble Prophet (S) states

My friend Gabriel, I do not need them. I thank Allah whenever I get satiated and I ask“

.Surat al-Anbiya’ ٢١:٣۵ -١

”.from Him whenever I get hungry

The best request a believer can have is that he should derive benefit from the blessings of Allah, on the one hand, and thank for it and, on the other hand, feel abjectness and in need of Allah and always open his hand [in supplication] to him because man is an existent [made up] of two equal parts; he has to both derive benefit from the blessings of Allah and thank for them—and this very attention and thanksgiving to the blessings of Allah results in prosperity—and on the other hand always feel abjectness and need, so as not to become proud and negligent and not conceive himself as superior than others. The Noble Prophet (S) states that having all the riches of the world at my disposal does not benefit me in any way. I always ought to be dependent on Allah all the time and always ask for blessings from him and be .thankful in return for those blessings

Allah’s Benevolence and Awareness of Religion and Asceticism in the World

:In continuation of the hadith, the Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Whenever Allah intends good for a person, He gives him religious“ ”.knowledge and expertise and makes him ascetic in the world and aware of his faults

:Whenever Allah intends to do good to a slave [of His], He grants him three things

.Awareness of religion .١

.Asceticism in the world and disinclination to its pleasures .٢

.Awareness of his faults and defects .٣

In contrast to these three characteristics, the worst thing for man is ignorance about) religion, love

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of the world and self-conceit and being preoccupied with fault-finding in other (.people

With consideration of the previous issues and what will be mentioned later, the main attention is on the sentence 'and makes him ascetic in the world' because the discussion concerns the station and status of the world. Therefore, if a person feels in his heart that he has no inclination to the world and only derive benefit from it to the extent of remedying his needs and engage in worldly affairs for the sake of .discharging divine duties, he ought to know that Allah intends good for him

Of course, in one sense Allah intends good for all people, but on the basis of His institutionalized will, He has made certain duties incumbent upon all people and has cautioned them against forbidden acts, now if free-willed man selects a correct path —even if the prerequisites of selection of the correct path are brought about by the grace of Allah—and has set the foundation to traverse the course of servitude and loves things which are pleasing to Allah, and make friends with the friends of Allah and takes strides in the way of Allah, the special existential will of Allah is responsible for :making him successful

وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الآخِرَهَ وَسَعَى لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَشْكُورًا

And whoever desires the hereafter and strives for it as he ought to strive and he is a" (believer, (as for) these, their striving shall surely be accepted."(۱)

In contrast, Allah has no enmity

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۱- ۱۷:۱۹ (Surat al-Isra' (or Bani Isra'il.

with any person and does not send man to hell without cause. Therefore, if a person,

of his own volition and as a result of his own bad choice, selects a path of infidelity and sin; the existential will of Allah makes him low and deprives him of the opportunity to perform good works.

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَة عَجَّلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاءُ لِمَنْ نُرِيدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ يَصْليها مَذْمُومًا مَدْحُورًا

"Whoever desires this present life, We hasten to make him therein what We please for whomever We desire, the We assign to him the hell, he shall enter it despised, driven away."(۱)

Therefore, a person for whom Allah intends good is granted success in three things (by Allah):

Firstly, the opportunity to acquire knowledge, and in contrast, if Allah does not intend good for a person, He deprives him of the opportunity to acquire knowledge, as has been narrated in the hadiths:

"Whenever Allah drives a slave away, He deprives him of acquisition of knowledge."(۲)

We thank Allah that of all his countless slaves, He has granted us the opportunity to learn religious knowledge. We ought to appreciate the worthiness of this great honor which has been allotted to us because with this great divine grace, the ground [or prerequisite] for attaining perfection has been provided. It has been narrated in a hadith that:

"All perfections [or virtues] are summed up in three things: ۱) expertise in religious knowledge; ۲) arranging an orderly program for the daily affairs of life; ۳) patience and perseverance of hardships."(۱)

۱- ۱۷:۱۸ Surat al-Isra' (or Bani Isra'il).

۲- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱, p. ۱۹۶.

The second grace of Allah is disinclination to the world and that man's heart ought not to covet the allurements and enticements of the world. Unfortunately, this characteristic lacks in most of us and we are more or less attached to the pleasures of the world. If man is too obsessed with rank and dignity in life and if he is always chasing after better cars, a better house, or better clothes, he is attached to the world and is deprived of attaining the blessings of the eternal Garden of bliss; as the Qur'an :states

تِلْکَ الدَّارُ الآخِرَهُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِینَ لاَ یُرِیدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِی الأَرْضِ وَلاَ فَسَادًا...

As for that future abode, We assign it to those who have no desire to exalt" themselves in the earth nor to make mischief and the good end is for those who guard (against evil..."(۲)

In interpreting this verse, a hadith has been narrated even if man's desire is only that he ought to have a better shoe lace than that of another person, this is an instance of seeking superiority and predominance over the others.(۳) So, man ought to try not to be trapped in the snare of the world, not even to the extent of desiring to have a better shoe lace than the others around. The heart has to be directed at Allah and the hereafter, not at shoe laces, houses, cars and et cetera et cetera, because the heart is a place for the descending of Allah's

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.Ibid., vol. ۷۸, p. ۱۷۲, hadith ۵ -۱

.Surat al-Qasas ۲۸:۸۳ -۲

.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۱۶, p. ۸۵ -۳

:light

(The heart of a believer is Allah's abode."(۱"

To whatever extent man's heart deviates and gets preoccupied with the world, man .gets deprived of the spiritual perfections [or virtues] to the same extent

Elucidating on the perception of the prophets (S) with regard to the world, Imam 'Ali :('a) states

Certainly, in the Prophet of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his" Progeny) was sufficient example for you and a proof concerning the vices of the world, its defects, the multitude of its disgraces and its evils, because its sides had been constrained for him while its flanks had been spread for others; he was deprived .of its milk and turned away from its adornments

If you want, I will, as a second example, relate to you concerning Moses ('a), the" Interlocutor of Allah, when he said, 'O Allah! I need whatever good Thou may grant me.' (Qur'an ۲۸:۲۴) By Allah, he asked Him only for bread to eat because he was used to eating the herbs of the earth, and the greenness of the herbs could be seen from .the delicate skin of his belly due to his thinness and paucity of his flesh

If you desire I can give you a third example of David ('a). He is the holder of the" Psalms and the narrator among the people of paradise. He used to prepare baskets of date palm leaves with his own hands and would say to his companions, 'Who among you will help me by purchasing

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۵۸, p. ۳۹ -۱

.it?' He used to eat barley bread bought out of its price

If you desire, I will tell you about 'Isa ('a), son of Mary ('a). He used a stone for a" pillow, put on coarse clothes and ate rough food. His condiment was hunger. His lamp at night was the moon. His shade during the winter was just the expanse of the earth eastward and westward. His fruits and flowers were only what grows from the earth for the cattle. He had no wife to allure him, nor any son to give grief, nor wealth to deviate his attention, nor greed to disgrace him. His two feet were his conveyance (and his two hands his servant."(۱

Has Allah got enmity with His saints [awliya'] so as to deprive them of worldly pleasures? Or are the hardships and problems of the world a means of their perfection and a sign of divine love for them? It is necessary to emphasize this point that it ought not to be imagined that wantonness and laziness have to be preferred and we ought to quit our obligations by seeking self-seclusion and retirement and not seek what is permissible [of the pleasures of this world] or quit going after protecting !the honor of Islam

The discussion is concerned with not falling in love with the world. If all the treasures and riches of the world were placed at the disposal of an individual and he derived all the pleasure from it but did not fall

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۵۰۸, sermon [khutbah] ۱۵۹ -۱

in love with it, no harm touches him. Thus, was Solomon, the son of David, who did not let all that wealth and that great kingdom [which he possessed] harm his prophetic ?mission and authority because he did not fall in love with it

He himself used to eat dry bread and employed his wealth and power to protect the honor of Allah's religion. If he went to or threatened to go to war with the Queen of Sheba, it was for the expansion of the divine government and in order to uproot polytheism from the surface of the world; not because he wanted to derive more .pleasure from the world for himself

The sum of the hadiths consecutively narrated by several authorities does not leave any doubt with regard to the asceticism of the lives of the Infallibles and that they endured hardships and they were not worldly and pleasure-seeking. Their method was that of cautioning men from worldliness. In the same way that there is no doubt regarding the existence of the Infallible Imams ('a), there is no doubt too concerning the way of their lives. One of their most delicate characteristics was worshiping Allah, rising up early in the morning [for prayer], supplicating, and crying. Friend and foe, .Shi'ah and Sunni, have all acknowledged and written books about these truths

Their method of character training was that of cautioning people against the world and inciting abhorrence of material gratifications. Attention has to be paid to this fact that

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the Infallible Imams ('a) always encouraged others to work and earn livelihoods in order not to be burdens of other people [in the society]. In reality, this means a medium between the world and Allah's pleasure, which is not possible for ordinary .people

In the early days of Islam wrong interpretations were made from the hadiths which reproached and castigated the world. When the world was reproached, people used to imagine that they ought not to derive any benefit from the world at all and man ought to live in a cave and wear clothes made of leaves. On the other hand, when they saw work and endeavor being praised in some of the hadiths, they imagined that .everything [in the world] has to be sacrificed for the stomach

Those who had been trained and schooled in the school of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) used to know that there is no disparity or incompatibility between deriving benefit from the blessings of the world and seeking the hereafter, but that love of the world is incompatible with love of the hereafter and there is no possibility of combining those two. It is not possible to both love Allah and what is hated by Him. The world as a .means of attaining the hereafter and the good pleasure of Allah is not abhorred

In order to conceive the balance between love of the world and/or lack of love for the world, man's outward works are not the criteria, but the standard is

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inward intention and motivation. Of course, sometimes works themselves show [the intention] of those who claim not to be in love with the world but break their heads and hands for the sake of the world and do not even abstain from what is prohibited. .Without the slightest doubt, the intention of such an individual is seeking the world

Therefore, nothing is achieved by making empty claims and the intention in the heart has to be taken into consideration. There are some Sufis who make pretentious claims in poetic language about being disinclined and disregardful of the world but will !not let go of a single coin whatsoever

Lesson ۱۵: Wisdom, Foresight and an Angle of the Prophet's (S) Way of Life

point

The Noble Prophet (S) reminds us about the defects of the world and materialism [or worldliness] and in contrast gives the good news of the superiority of asceticism and disinclination to the world. It is something of a miracle that the Noble Prophet (S) mentions issues of edification of character in one specific field by means of different expressions and various ways, the result of which is that everyone benefits from his .sayings according to his own understanding and natural capacity

Issues are so many and have been expressed in different ethical and instructional forms that every person can derive benefit from them according to his own taste and disposition and select the best provisions of edification of character which suit them. One of the ways which the Noble Prophet (S) has selected is recommending asceticism and encouraging people to

p: ۱۹۷

undertake it and citing the invaluable effects which result from disinclination to the .world

Wisdom and Foresight Are the Products of Asceticism

O Abu Dharr! A slave of Allah does not live ascetically save that Allah stabilizes" wisdom in his heart and his tongue overflows with it, and makes it aware of the defects, pains and quarrels of the world and leads him to the eternal Garden of bliss in ".a sound state

In this section, the emphasis of the Noble Prophet (S) is that asceticism and disinclination makes man's heart ready to accept wisdom and after that he perceives

truths. People who are obsessed about the world cannot conceive the realities of the world because love of the world makes man heedless and negligent. In contrast, people who are disinclined to the world perceive realities because they are superior .over the world and choose the best way after comparing it with the hereafter

Asceticism denotes disinclination or lack of desire, as has been narrated with regard :(to the brothers of Yusuf ('a

وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ وَكَانُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِينَ

And they sold him for a small price, a few pieces of silver, showing no desire for" (him."(١

Asceticism in the world means that man ought not to be inclined to the world; if he has some wealth and certain facilities at his disposal, he thinks about how to use them for the good pleasure of Allah and is not obsessed with acquisition of possessions. (People like prophet Solomon ('a) had such a state that they used to eat

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.Surat Yusuf ١٢:٢٠ -١

dry bread in spite of having so much wealth and a great kingdom and lived in (.contentment and frugality

In explanation of the sentence, "Allah stabilizes wisdom in his heart" it is necessary to :mention a few points

There is a close relationship between disinclination to the world and perception of .١ divine knowledge; that is to say, it is impossible to find a person who in spite of his heart being obsessed with the world, his soul at the same time is overflowing with .divine knowledge and awareness

Wisdom, which is a product of disinclination to the world, stabilizes man's . ٢ knowledge and awareness and defends against instability of belief and wavering of

the mind. It is possible for man to attain knowledge and perceive the truth but still his awareness is shaky and unstable because he has not attained certitude or certainty, .which stabilizes and steadies knowledge in the heart

Among the basic principles of religion, in addition to the fundamental principle of belief, the stability of knowledge also has special value and it is for this reason that seasonal and periodical faith not only has no value, but also has negative :consequences and has been reproached in various instances in the Qur’an

فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِی الْفُلْكِ دَعَوُا اللهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُون

So when they ride in the ships they call upon Allah, being sincerely obedient to Him,“ (but when He brings them safe to the land, lo! They associate others (with Him).”(١

.٣

.Surat al-‘Ankabut ٢٩:٦٥ -١

Once wisdom has become steady, it does not remain confined to the heart but its effects become apparent in speech and works and conduct too. The words of a person in whose heart wisdom has become stable will also be wise: he abstains from vain and futile talk and counsels in such a philosophical and thoughtful way that his .words deserve praise and extolment

Yes, the tongue is passage for man’s heart and, in other words, the exudations of a man’s heart are carried out on the tongue because it is the oozing external part of the jar which is inside him, of course this oozing out not only appears on the tongue but .with the rest of man’s conduct too

The other effect of aversion of the world is that the defects of the world become apparent to man; that is to say, man can witness the deficiencies, lowliness and inferiority of the world in the case that he liberates himself from attachment to it, otherwise it is not expected of the lovers of the world to see the defects of their

beloved and darling (the world), because infatuation with the world blinds man's eyes from seeing its defects and deafens man's ears from hearing its deficiencies, on the contrary he perceives as beautiful its vileness and supposes his discreditable conduct which has appeared as a result of excessive fondness with the world to be fair. This interpretation has been explained by different expressions in the Glorious Qur'an, amongst

:them

... زَيَّنَّا لَهُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ...

(We have made their deeds fair-seeming to them..."(۱..."

... بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ أَمْرًا...

(your souls have made the matter light for you..."(۲..."

... وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ...

(and the Satan has made their deeds fair-seeming to them..."(۳..."

The various interpretations are indicative of this truth that falling in love with the world causes the world and the worldly behavior of man to manifest themselves as fair-seeming in his perception and the more this fondness increases, the more beautiful the world and its defects appear in man's perception for the reason that the lover does not see the defects and deficiencies of their beloved. Without doubt, such an individual only sees the outward deceptive world and is incapable of perceiving and :comprehending its inner side and seeing beyond it

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِن الْحَيوهِ الدُّنْيا وَهُمْ عَن الآخِرَهِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ

They know the outward of this world's life, but of the hereafter they are absolutely" (heedless."(۴

In contrast, clear-sighted and pragmatic people with regard to the world see both its good and its bad. This group, in contrast to the first group which only sees the beautiful appearance and fair-seeming lines and spots from this venomous snake, :also perceives its deadly poison and fatal fang

The example of the world is like a serpent. It is soft to the touch but its inside is full of" venom. An ignorant person who has fallen into deceit is attracted towards it but a (wise and intelligent man keeps on his guard against it."(۵

,Yes

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۱- Surat al-Naml ۲۷:۴.

۲- Surat Yusuf ۱۲:۱۸.

۳- Surat al-Naml ۲۷:۲۴.

۴- Surat al-Rum ۳۰:۷.

۵- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۱۴۱, short saying ۱۱۵, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

the spiritual insight and far-sightedness of divine people is a hurdle against their getting deceived by the superficial manifestations of the world and their profound perception of horizons further than material horizons is their basic difference with :(materialistic superficial perceptions of hedonists; in the words of Imam 'Ali ('a

The lovers of Allah are those who look at the inward side of the world while the other" people look at its outward side. They busy themselves with the remoter benefits while the other people busy themselves with in the immediate benefits. Therefore, they kill in their hearts those things which they feared would have killed them and leave here (in this world what they think would leave them."(۱

:In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! If you see a brother of yours living ascetically in the world, give heed to" ".his words because wisdom is given to him

This talk is a continuation of His Holiness' that Allah establishes wisdom in the heart of whoever lives ascetically. Therefore, if man were disinclined to the world, he has attained wisdom and his speech will be wise when he speaks for the reason that the speech which flows from the heart of a person who is detached from the world undoubtedly settles in the heart. An ascetic person has proved by means of his conduct that he believes in what he says; therefore, expectation of wise talk from him has to be had. In contrast, a person who is seduced by the world

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.Ibid., p. ۱۲۸۷, short saying ۴۲۲ -۱

and is drowned in its gratifications is deprived of wisdom and knowledge and the depravations of this world have closed his eyes against truths and consequently his .word is unavailing and far from wisdom

Signs of the Most Ascetic People

point

When the discussion reaches here, Abu Dharr gets enamored by ascetics, for this reason he requests the Prophet (S) to explain the attributes of an ascetic so that he may embark upon making plans of friendship and learning wisdom from the ascetic once he identifies him. In response, the Noble Prophet (S) acquaints the most ascetic :person by citing five characteristics

Whoever does not Forget Graves And Decomposed Corpses .۱

The first characteristic of the most ascetic person is that he does not forget graves and decomposed corpses. The lovers of the world always have their eyes set on the world and its attractions and mourn over things which they do not themselves have; but a person who does not pay heed to the world always sets his sight on graves and the ruins of the world, because they are the signs of the destructibility and extinction .of the world

An ascetic is a person who does not forget graves, desolate places, and ancient and obliterated places. Of course, not in that sense that man ought to spent their entire time from morning to evening at grave sites but to go visiting the dwellers of tombs .from time to time and take lesson from them

People seduced by the world turn their faces away and flee when they pass by graves fearing lest their feasting and drinking

gets overturned. They get upset when they hear death being mentioned and know it to be a fault; in contrast, those who have set their attention on the hereafter always .remember the Day of Resurrection and never forget death

And Renounces The Adornments Of The World .۲

The second attribute of the most ascetic person is that he renounces excess adornments in the world. Without the least doubt, man has need of the facilities of the world and derives benefit from comforts which are necessary for the continuation of life; amenities such as clothing, housing, food and embellishments and all too often they play a role in the perfection of man and for this reason the divine law not only has .permitted but exhorted them too

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَهَ اللهِ الَّتِی أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ وَالطَّیِّبَاتِ مِن الرِّزْقِ ...

Say: Who has prohibited the embellishment of Allah which He has brought forth for" (His servants and the good provisions?"(۱

What ought to be done is to benefit from worldly facilities and adornments to the extent of need and forsake excessive and extravagant adornments and give the rest to others, because if he does not content himself with only what is needed and knows no limits and bounds, he will not get contented no matter how much he derives benefit from worldly embellishments and gratifications and no matter how much he adds to the decoration, luster and beautification [of his house] and continually changes curtains with more expensive and exorbitant ones and acquires for himself a

modern car because man’s nature

.Surat al-A‘raf ۷:۳۲ -۱

.is such that it seeks variety and is never satiated not recognizing any limitations

With all certainty, such an individual is not an ascetic; an abstinent person is one who derives benefit from the world to the extent of need. He contents himself with a protecting roof and does not intend to acquire a grand building. Or, if he has need of a car, he gets a car which suits his needs of going to and fro, he does not insist on the .car being definitely modern and luxurious

In this sentence, His Holiness’ emphasis is on forsaking superfluous adornments, otherwise embellishments which are a necessity of life and/or are necessary in the maintenance of individual and family life are not only not blameworthy but have also been recommended; like man’s adorning himself for his wife and a woman’s beautifying herself for her husband, wearing clean clothes, cleaning the hair and face, combing the hair and perfuming the body. Basically, the status of a believing person necessitates that he abstains from outward and inward contaminations and bad .smells which cause the aversion of others

For this reason, Islam emphasizes keeping the body and clothes clean and beautifying the face and hair. It has been recommended a lot that when man wants to go to the mosque and/or enter a group of people, he ought to spray perfume so that the others may enjoy his sweet smell, not a despicable and abhorrent smell which .offends them

Or, it has been advised that

at the time of prayer man should spray perfume and two rak‘ats of a man who has perfumed themselves has more reward than seventy rak‘ats of prayer. What is

necessary is for man to forsake additional adornments which are not rationally wise and are not beneficial in the direction of man's perfection and are signs of hedonism .and mammonism and adoration of pleasures of the flesh

:It has been recorded in description of the Noble Prophet's (S) characteristics that

The Prophet's (S) habit was to look himself in the mirror and clean his face and comb" his hair. Often times, he used to do so with the help of water placed in front of him and beside the people of the house, he used to beautify himself for his companions and used to state, 'Allah loves his slave who prepares and beautifies himself when going (out of the house to visit his brothers'."(١)

He Prefers What Is Eternal Over What Is Ephemeral .٣

The third quality of the most ascetic person is that he prefers what is eternal over .what is ephemeral

If a comparison is made between the short-lived and vanishing pleasures of the world and the constant and everlasting pleasures of the hereafter, he wisely opts for the eternal pleasures of the Garden of bliss overlooking the ephemeral pleasures of this world. He also would rather bear the hardships and difficulties of responsibilities and duties than the ease and comfort of the world, because his far-sighted eyes are set on the future of the world; when moving, he only perceives the

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.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۶, p. ٣٣٠ -١

.destination and he does not recognize the world save as a bridge for passage

وَالآخِرَهُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى

(While the hereafter is better and more lasting."(١"

And He Does Not Look Forward To Tomorrow .۴

And Considers Himself Among The Dead .۵

The fourth and fifth characteristics of the most ascetic person are that he does not .count tomorrow as part of his life and considers himself as living among the dead

Man has to always perform his duties and never stop striving and activity. Without the least doubt, a person who has embarked upon discharging responsibilities cannot be in comfort and luxury and a pleasure-seeker, because endeavor and activity are not .compatible with luxurious and lazy living

A person who is obsessed with the world is always after acquiring facilities for pleasure and ease; when time comes for activity and endeavor, sometimes lessons and discussion and personal study and the rest of the duties, his love of comfort dissuades him from activity and postpones duties to tomorrow and he is not prepared to hurt his comfort and pleasure-seeking. In truth, procrastination and postponing duties to the other day is a result of man's long-term planning for himself and his hope of attaining them in the future of his life and for this reason he puts off today's .responsibilities in the hope of tomorrow

It is natural that attaining those protracted hopes calls for a long lifespan and it is for this reason that the mammon hopes for a longer and more protracted life and this results in procrastination and postponement of works and/or as a result of fear

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.Surat al-A'la ۸۷:۱۷ -۱

.of failure, causes dejection and stress

An ascetic person and one who is disinclined to the world discharges his daily duties [on time] and contrary to a hedonist, he does not count tomorrow as part of his life so as to put his duties off until then, because he is not sure of his being alive the following day. He believes that even if he still had a tomorrow, he will have other responsibilities .to discharge

Protracted Hopes and Procrastination of Obligations Is a Sign of Weakness of Faith and Weakness of Confidence in Allah

As has been mentioned, a lot of people have protracted hopes and have expectations of living long years in this world and their work and endeavor is for the future and they are always worried about the future and that which must come to pass. They are distressed that if they do not go to university, they might not have a job and not have an income for their daily living. They are anxious about whether their future lives will .be easy or not

Of course, this nervousness is a result of not having a spirit of faith and trust in Allah; otherwise, a person who completely relies on Allah and perceives his graces and blessings has no apprehensions about tomorrow because Allah, the Exalted, is the Possessor and Owner of everything. In addition, from where is a person who is ?nervous about his future certainly sure that he has a tomorrow

Islam and religious sciences commend that man has to be engaged in discharging today's duties and not to be thinking about tomorrow because it

p: ۲۰۸

is not clear whether he will be alive up to the next hour or not. Of course, apprehending being deprived of the world and future pleasures of the earth is blameworthy, otherwise if man discharges today's duties and makes plans and decisions for possible future responsibilities, this is not only praiseworthy but is .considered a part of religious duties

Every duty and responsibility is incumbent on a particular day and time assigned to it: today my prayers are incumbent and I have no responsibility over tomorrow's prayers, but if I remain alive until tomorrow, it becomes incumbent that I recite prayers tomorrow too; it is the same with rest of the duties every one of which is .[incumbent in its own occasion and we do not have any more duties [other than that

Therefore, being anxious about the future and the end of his worldly life is irrelevant but apprehension of the definite future and last day is proper because there is no

escaping from tomorrow's resurrection and hereafter, even if it were pleasing to some people if there was escaping from the hereafter.

Allah, the Exalted, states:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ...

"O you who believe! Be careful (of your duty to) Allah, and let every soul consider what it has sent on for the morrow..."(1)

In continuation of the hadith, with regard to Allah's recommendations to him about forsaking the collection of wealth, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"O Abu Dharr! Allah has not sent revelation

1- Surat al-Hashr ۵۹:۱۸.

to me [recommending] so that I may engage in the acquisition of wealth and has on the contrary inspired me to thank, praise and adore the Lord for His graces and to be one of the prostrating slaves and when your death draws nigh, worship Him."

If the collection of wealth and saving of money was desirable and would cause the perfection of man, Allah would have advised the Noble Prophet (S) to embark upon acquisition and preservation of possessions and riches. But Allah never at all made such recommendations but to be engaged in praising, worshiping and supplicating to Allah to the moment of his death.

Of course, adoration and servitude of Allah has various manifestations: sometimes worship denotes discharging personal duties and early rising [for the purpose of worship] and at other times it connotes carrying out social duties, acquisition of knowledge, teaching, preaching and propagation of Islamic culture and finally every duty which is incumbent upon man.

People who have selected the Noble Prophet as the best model and example ought to try to their best ability to harmonize their lifestyles with his; it is for this reason that :His Holiness explains a niche of practical way of life and conduct

O Abu Dharr! I wear coarse clothes and sit on the ground, wash my hands after food“ ”.and whoever does not follow my way and conduct is not from me

The standard of deriving benefit from the material benefits for the Prophet (S), who has the power of dominion

p: ٢١٠

over creation [and] can have the world at his free disposal, is to the measure of securing his basic needs. Previously, His Holiness stated that Gabriel [Jibra'il] set the treasures of the world at the Noble Prophet's (S) free disposal but His Holiness abstained from consenting. In this section, he clearly states his contentment, simple :living and social conduct

On account of the way of life of Allah's Prophet (S), as the most eminent creature and bringer of revelation, being the object of attention of the Muslims and even the non-Muslims, all the practical conduct and states and even the minute details of his way of .life and social manners were under the close scrutiny of his companions

It is for this reason that a lot of the details of his way of life have been narrated by word of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), his companions, the generation which followed the companions but never met the Noble Prophet (S) himself and many other people. In addition to that, His Holiness himself in certain instances has stated a section of his way of conduct in the same way that in this section he hints at an angle of his personal conduct so that the followers of His Holiness, by knowing his natural temperament .and conduct, may select him as their role model and example

His Holiness states that he wears coarse clothes and does not wear soft clothes so as to be at ease, he sits on the floor not on fine and

p: ٢١١

expensive carpets. He was bound to eat with his fingers at the time of eating food; in addition to that, he used to clean his hands after food. He used to mount a bare and undecorated donkey and used to carry another man at the back. From this explanation the humility and peak of servitude of His Holiness becomes apparent. It is amazing that His Holiness was this humble and down-to-earth, to the extent that he used to mount an undecorated donkey and as a result of the extremity of his humility used to carry another man with him, in an environment where pomp, arrogance and .haughtiness used to reign with injustice

In contrast, we, the claimers of being his followers, are preoccupied with wearing good clothes and eating delicious food and finally securing a comfortable and easy life for ourselves. We covet buying a modern and luxurious car and desire to derive as .much pleasure from the world as possible

It is worth mentioning that in this era it is not possible to expect the people's ways of life to conform with the time of the Noble Prophet (S) because the standards of life and the economic conditions of every era differs to that of another age and the equivalence of scientific and technological advancements have brought about great leaps in the living conditions of mankind. What is incumbent is to follow the inviolable Islamic laws and fundamental postulates and in every time the social position of [the majority

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of the] people has to be taken into consideration and to abstain from pomp, .acquisitiveness and pride

Lesson ۱۶: The Danger of Loving Wealth and Position and Praising Contentment and Simple Living

The World, a Goal or a Means

On the basis of the Qur'anic perception, if there were no world, there would not be a hereafter. We build our hereafter by means of our volitional works and actions in this world, as has been recorded that the world is a [preparatory] ground for the

hereafter. Therefore, if there were no world, no one would go to the eternal Garden .because the blessings of heaven are a reward for worldly works

The divine graces, virtues and transcendental states of the hereafter are all produce of our efforts and works which man has discharged in the world; therefore, the world has a lot of values. Taking this reality into consideration, the question is presented as to why so much reproach and condemnation has been heaped on the world, which .has such value

In response to this question, it ought to be said that the life of this world from the point of view that it is in the category of Allah's creatures has no individual essential reality whatsoever and is basically the life system of the world and the best system .that enjoys the benefits of ultimate perfection and beauty

For this reason, the main problem has to be looked for elsewhere. With a bit of concentration on the verses of the Glorious Qur'an and the hadiths, we gather that the fault and flaw lies in the quality of man's relationship with the world

p: ٢١٣

and his way of interaction with it, because it is that very way of his interaction with the world which can either be beneficial or harmful, valuable or worthless, good or bad for .his future

From his interaction, conduct, life and future of man, save in a few instances which as a result the deterministic imbalances give rise to a chain of vices and deficiencies, what defect and fault can be found with the world? In addition, these vices and flaws .are incomparable to the countless virtues and perfections of the world

Therefore, it has become clear that blame and fault lies in the way of man's relationship with the world; a relationship which is formed on the basis of giving primacy to the world and a materialistic perception to the world: the perception of people who imagine that beside the life of this world there is no other life but in reality this fallacy is null and void looking at the world with such a perception is an error

.which will give rise to more mistakes in the conduct and behavior of man

Therefore, we ought to rectify our conception of the world and understand that living is not confined to the life of the world but there is an eternal life for man beyond this earth. In the case that man considers the world as a station and passing place, not the main destination and ultimate goal, it is natural that he will secure for himself the ,conveniences of life

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enough wealth and riches needed for attaining the necessary perfection. In this case, food, clothing, housing, a car, money, riches and leadership are considered as preliminaries and means, not the main goal. But in the instance that they are the main goal, neither preliminaries nor means, they prevent man from attaining human .perfection and his ultimate goal and it is for this reason that they have been criticized

The Reproached World

With regard to what has been mentioned, the Noble Prophet reproaches love of :wealth and position stating

O Abu Dharr! The love of wealth and position harms man's religion more than two" vicious wolves injure the herd of sheep which they ambush at night time so that they ".have all the time till morning to ravage the herd of sheep

In order to describe the importance of the subject and warn the Islamic community [ummah] about the danger of love of the world and the jeopardy of obsession with worldly position and social status, His Holiness likens love of the world and position and social rank to two vicious wolves which ambush a herd of sheep confined in a certain place at night and from night until morning embark upon devouring them. It is natural that once a wolf attacks a herd of sheep, it does not get content with one sheep but tears apart every one of them and finally gets busy with eating them. Now, ?if two brutal wolves assault a herd of sheep, do they leave a sheep alive

The danger of

love of the world and leadership to man's religion and ethical values is more than the jeopardy of two vicious wolves which attack a herd of sheep, because love of the world and leadership destroys the spiritual and human and religious identity of man: .that to which the identity and real existence of man is attached

The purport of His Holiness' words in this section has been consecutively narrated by) several authorities of hadith and it has been narrated by different expressions. Even in the book entitled, "Usul al-Kafi" a section has especially been set aside for the (.recrimination of love of the world and leadership

His Holiness' words are not idle talk but a reality which has been set forth in the form of a warning to the Muslims. This is a reality which historical experience has also confirmed. From the early days of Islam up to now, the root of all the treacheries which have been committed against Islam has been love of money and leadership, because the danger that a person who has been seduced by earthly riches and power !poses on religion is more than that of any other enemy

Diverting the course of the caliphate and forcibly usurping it and the establishment of oppressive and invalid governments and all the blows which have been inflicted on the body of Islam arise from love of wealth and position. Therefore, with regard to the jeopardy of love of riches and status to man's religion, we ought to be

vigilant, and until we are youths and the two mean qualities of love of wealth and obsession with rank have not yet become firm in us, fight them and never let them .develop roots in our hearts

If we acquire wealth, we ought to make use of only what we need for our basic needs and put the rest at the disposal of the poor, relatives and the needy friends. We ought :to try to give that which we love most to others, for the reason that the Qur'an states

لَنْ تَنَالُوا البِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ...

By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spend benevolently out of“ (what you love…”(1)

Without the least doubt, giving things which man loves prevents the establishment of) (.love of wealth in man’s heart

The likeness of what we have mentioned can be explained in two aspects of fighting against the vice of love of leadership [and power]: once man attains leadership and responsibility, he ought to try not to let the feelings of superiority, arrogance and bossiness appear in him but try to serve in disguise and not seek fame, people’s love, personal renown and reputation. Of course, the danger of love of power for people who have not yet attained any position is not in question and is directed at people for whom the ground for position and rank has been prepared and puts their religion in .real jeopardy

Poor Believers Are Light–burdened on the Day of Resurrection

After the Prophet (S) has warned against love of wealth and position, Abu Dharr

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.Surat Al ‘Imran ۳:۹۲ -۱

:asks

O Prophet of Allah, does Allah give precedence to the fearful, lowly and submissive in“ ”?going to the Garden of bliss

After comprehending that the seekers of wealth and position are heading towards perdition, Abu Dharr imagines that Allah gives priority to the fearful and submissive; for this reason, he asks the Noble Prophet (S) in this regard and His Holiness refutes :him stating

The indigent among the Muslims will be led to paradise with their feet placed on the“ shoulders of other people. Then, the treasurers of heaven will say, ‘Stay in your

places until your accounts are attended to.' They will respond, 'Why are we going to be held to account? We swear upon Allah that we did not have power to spend in Allah's way and embark upon discharging justice. Wealth which was granted to us was just enough to secure our needs so we could neither spend it nor be greedy with ".'it; but we worshipped Allah and in the end accepted his divine call

What is surprising is that in spite of the praise and extolment which religious sciences have heaped on values such as humility, modesty and keeping alive the praise of Allah, the Noble Prophet (S) does not mention the adorers of Allah as the leaders to the Garden of eternal bliss and instead states that the guides to paradise are people who protected their religion in spite of poverty and need and never relinquished .making the jihad, effort and fighting and/or acquisition of knowledge

Those

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ones will be led to the eternal Garden of bliss mounted on other people's shoulders; as if they want to fly. When it shall be said to them to wait until their accounts are attended to, they will reply that they did not have any government and power so as to select of our their own volition the course of civility with the people and discharge justice; we did not have any money to spend in Allah's way and/or be greedy with. What was expected of us was worship and obedience of Allah, which we did not .neglect at performing

Yes, they did not have any wealth to be answerable for lavish living and waste and/or negligence at helping other people. It is for this reason that their accounting does not take long, because if they had had wealth and had spent it in the way of right, even .then their accounting would not last long

With regard to the criticism which has been laid on the world and the dangers which are directed against man's religion from the realm of love of riches and rank, the Noble Prophet's (S) speech is comforting to the conscience for people who have no access to worldly riches and/or for the reason of discharging duties like knowledge

and the jihad and fighting with the enemy, they did not manage to derive any benefit from the world. It is true that if man were to have possessions, he can spend it in the way of

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Allah by helping other people and use it at the service of Islam but a person who embarks upon acquisition of knowledge and/or being present at battlefronts and hence is encumbered in the acquisition of wealth and riches and spending it in the way of Allah still attains a higher position and status than a person who spends his possessions in the course of Allah because he sets aside as capital his wealth while the seeker of knowledge and the soldier at the battlefront expends as his capital his very being, his safety and ease in the way of Allah and values which such a person attains are higher than the produce of other people.

When man at the end of the war returns from the battlefront empty-handed and sees those unfamiliar with war and the jihad have acquired enormous wealth for themselves, have built magnificent buildings for themselves and consequently have brought to hand all the amenities for their feasting and drinking, it is likely that the Devil tempts him that you went to the battlefront and remained empty-handed with regard to the wealth of the world, but look at where the other people have reached! You went to the combat front and fought and got injured and/or lame and now no one values you nor is any one heedful of you and the other people have got posts and positions for themselves! This seduction of the Devil often produces effects in people of weak faith and gives rise to

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their regretting.

Likewise, it is likely for people who embarked upon acquisition of religious education in theological schools to get tempted to think that what a great mistake they made! The other person went to university and got a suitable career after graduation and got colossal wealth under the auspices of his job but as a seminary student after

thirty years of learning and I am still incapable of acquiring bread for my dinner! These seductions always come about for believers who are empty-handed in the world. It is for this reason that His Holiness with his words sets their hearts and minds at peace that if you have remained behind the caravan of the rich but still you have attained values which others have been deprived of and on the Day of Resurrection .they will envy your position

:In continuation, His Holiness states

O Abu Dharr! The world pre-occupies the lives and bodies of people. Allah, the" Magnificent and High, will hold us accountable over permitted conveniences more so ".with things which have been acquired by illicit means

Without the least doubt, in the acquisition of riches of the world bodily and energetic capital has to be expended. People who are occupied with work and acquisition of wealth know this truth very well that sometimes man's problems are so numerous that they deprive man of the peaceful sleep of the night and he always thinks about checks and precious stones, selling and buying, inflation and deflation, debts and taxes and issues

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of this nature. In any case, a person who embarks upon acquisition of wealth has to strive hard whether he wants to acquire that wealth by permissible means or by illicit ways, because wealth does not easily come to hand. It is natural that individual does .not find a single opportunity for worship and meditation

He does not find the convenience to reflect about Allah, the Day of Resurrection and supplication to Allah. A person who has love of the world in the deepest recesses of his heart goes so far as to perform acts of worship as a means of attaining the world, he is never at peace from morning to night and if he wakes up at night to perform the night prayers, he requests for his daily income to be increased and his riches to get .colossal

Is there any intention more mean and infamous than that man should invoke Allah and worship Him for the sake of his stomach and material possessions? Worship which ought to be a means of attaining heaven and higher than that the good pleasure of Allah is set as a means of getting more bread, a better house and a more luxurious car.

In contrast, riches and poverty are the same for a heart which has been liberated from the world, ashes and purified gold make no difference in his perception. If we have no access to such people, the reality is that such people do indeed exist. There are People for

p: ٢٢٢

whom the litter in the dustbin is equivalent with a heap of bank notes and the only thing which is worth any value in their opinion is that which is employed in the way of Allah. It is likely that man does not believe what he does not see, but I believe because I have seen with my own eyes:

About forty years ago I went to buy a self-cooker from a tradesman in the bazaar in Tehran with the intention of returning to Qum after buying all the other things which I needed. The attraction of that man so much captivated me that I stayed with him up to evening time and he kept giving me pieces of advice. In between the advice and recommendations, tears kept flowing from his eyes wetting the white beards on his cheeks.

He asked me, "What is the name of the first book which you study in the seminary?" I said, "Sharh Amthalih." He said, "What is written in the introduction of the book?" I said, "The beginning of knowledge is awareness of the High..." He said, "You have learnt that the beginning of knowledge is awareness of Allah!" He was talking while tears were pouring from his cheeks like drops of rain. In this pandemonium, his shop-boys were busy selling and he was inattentively getting the money and throwing it in the cash box.

When it was time for afternoon prayers, he arose with tearful eyes and went to the

mosque and after the

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prayers and eating lunch, I returned to his store and I stayed there until evening time and kept listening to his advices.

Yes, if love of the world is divested of man, heaps of money have no value to him and his heart belongs elsewhere. But if love of the world is embedded in man's heart, his heart belongs elsewhere even as he prays and his prayers too have worldly goal. Once the heart is occupied by love of position, man still plans to attain position even if he were to study mystics and he were acquainted with spiritual wayfaring and edification of character, and he incessantly thinks about attaining positions which others have not attained; in any case, he intends to gain predominance over the others. In reality, he does not intend to be Allah's slave. He is like the magicians of India who after strenuous practice and effort attain powers to perform certain miraculous works which other people are incapable of performing.

The one who has been trained by Islam only intends to adore Allah and nothing else. Islam wants man whose spiritual striving and endeavor are for the good pleasure of Allah, even the wealth which he acquires is for the good pleasure of Allah. In the same way that Imam 'Ali ('a) used to care for date-trees until they gave fruit and dug wells to supply water which he placed at the disposal of the people in the way of Allah.

Therefore, we ought to try to reduce

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our affection for the world. Of course, naturally the more material blessings are placed at the disposal of ordinary people, the more they get addicted to the world because once the graces of the world increase, their sweetness gradually settles on man's palate and increases man's inclination to the world. It is for this reason that people who chase after possessions and riches have heavy responsibilities and they will be held to account for every bit of their possessions, whether they acquired it

.legally or illegally

In contrast to ordinary people, the saints [awliya'] of Allah do not in the least bit fall in love with the world no matter how abundant the graces at their disposal; of course, this kind of person is scarce. In the whole course of history people like Solomon have been very few who in spite of having all those countless blessings and a great .kingdom used to eat dry bread

Therefore, in regard to the invaluable recommendation of the Noble Prophet (S), it is better for man not to be pre-occupied with thoughts of acquiring wealth and riches and cleanse his heart from the contaminations of the world by means of worship and :adoration of Allah; as was Abu Dharr whom Imam 'Ali ('a) describes in this way

In the past I had a brother on the course of Allah whose contemptuous look on the" (worthless world made him look great in my eyes..."(١

Praising Contentment and Simple Living and Reproaching Covetousness

:In continuation of the hadith, the Noble Prophet states

O Abu Dharr! I have"

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ١٢٢٥, short saying ٢٨١, trans. Fayd al-Islam -١

requested Allah to grant to those who love me only what is enough for their daily ".subsistence and to increase the wealth and children of my enemies

As has already been mentioned, for most people the availability of a great deal of blessings gives birth to more affection and love for the world in their hearts. Therefore, it is better not to place a lot of facilities at their disposal and only to give them enough amenities to meet their basic needs so as to prevent them from being .contaminated by the world

That is why the Noble Prophet (S), as a result of compassion for his adherents, asks

Allah to grant them enough only to meet their basic needs not to the extent where they will be led to extravagance and waste. In contrast, he asks Allah to increase the wealth and progeny of his enemies.

In reality, adding to the material capital of Allah is a divine practice derived from "the law of divine deception', that is to say, Allah grants so much material and worldly blessings to the infidels that they get deceived by the world and become proud and as a result of their being drowned in the world, their disbelief and sin increases and as a result of this their punishment and requital in the hereafter multiplies and becomes more tormenting. In addition to that, their worldly worries too multiply.

For the enemies of Allah and his saints, there is no punishment higher than that as a

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result of their drowning in the allurements of the world, they become deprived of divine grace and their lonesomeness, deviation and disbelief increases. In this regard, Allah states:

وَلاَ يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا نُمْلِى لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لأَنْفُسِهِمْ إِنَّمَا نُمْلِى لَهُمْ لَيَزْدَادُوا إِثْمًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ

"And let not those who disbelieve that Our granting them respite is better for their souls; We grant them respite only that they may add to their sins; and they shall have a disgraceful chastisement."(۱)

In another place, He states:

فَلاَ تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلاَ أَوْلاَدُهُمْ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِى الْحَيوةِ الدُّنْيا وَتَزْهَقَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كافِرُونَ

"Let not then their property and children excite your admiration; Allah only wishes to chastise them with these in the world's life and that their souls may depart while they are unbelievers."(۲)

In order for the believers not to set their eyes on the riches of the world and not to envy the enamored with the world, Allah states:

لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْکَ إِلَى مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَکَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

"They would certainly say, 'Only our eyes have been covered over, rather we are an enchanted people'."(3)

In response to a question about the meaning of 'Good', Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"Good is not that your wealth and progeny should be much, but good is that your knowledge should be much, your forbearance should be great, and that you should vie with each other in worship of Allah. If you do good deeds you thank Allah, but if you commit

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۱- Surat Al 'Imran ۳:۱۷۸.

۲- Surat al-Tawbah (or Bara'ah) ۹:۵۵.

۳- Surat al-Hijr ۱۵:۸۸.

evil you seek the forgiveness of Allah. In this world, good is for two persons only: the man who commits sins but rectifies it and the man who hastens towards good actions..."(1)

Recommending Detachment from the World and Disinclination to It

In continuation of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"O Abu Dharr! Happy are the ascetics in the world and people who have set their hearts on the hereafter and have set the earth of Allah as their bedding and soil as their carpet and its water as their perfume. They have got attached to the Book of Allah as the undershirt gets attached to the body and supplication is like their outer shirts and they have disentangled and freed themselves from the world."

Happy is the man who has no disposition to the world and only thinks about the afterworld, because they have knowledge of the world and where the real value lies. They are prepared to sit on the ground and sleep on the earth and for them the earth

and expensive fine carpets are the same. In contrast, we, the infatuated by the world, are never ready to sit on the ground and feel ashamed when people see us sitting on the ground. We ought to give rise to this spirit in ourselves of perceiving the earth and fine carpets in the same light. If one day duty calls for it, we ought to humbly sit down beside a poor man and comfort his heart without feeling ashamed.

Ascetics never plan on certainly perfuming themselves with

1- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۰۵۸, wisdom [hikmat] ۹۲, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

expensive colognes, but clean and perfume themselves with water which flows from the earth. Their relationship with Allah is so strong that when they feel as if Allah is conversing with them during recitation of the Glorious Qur'an and/or when supplicating, it seems as though they are saying the same word with Allah.

They are living among the people and their faces are exposed to everyone but their hearts are elsewhere and their derivation of benefit from the world is tantamount to turning their backs towards it and they roll it up like a scroll. They have set their hearts on that which is with Allah because the world is fast-passing and heading towards extinction.

It has repeatedly been said that these instructional expressions do not imply that we ought to completely forsake Allah's graces and/or does not mean that the people who have worldly blessings at their disposal are essentially bad people. These explications are meant to reduce our obsession with the world and see what the duty calls for.

If duty calls for us to wear good clothes, mount a fine horse and do other things like that, we ought to do it because it is duty and is desirable by Allah. But if we chase after good things as result of our heart's wishes, we have set foot on a dangerous course and, whether we like it or not, we will be drawn towards actions which are not pleasing to Allah because the wishes of the heart

and the desires of Allah cannot be combined. The way of the heart and the desires of the carnal soul diverge from the course of adoration of Allah and never are they close to each other.

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَن اتَّخَذَ اِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَى بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً...

"Have you then considered him who takes his low desire for his god, and Allah has made him err having knowledge and has set a seal upon his ear and his heart and put a covering over his eye..."(۱)

Therefore, these explanations intend to reduce our affection for the world. Encouragement that we ought to sit on the ground and not be obsessed with expensive carpets, decorations and luxurious living does not imply that we exert unnecessary hardships on ourselves and not derive any benefit from the benefits of Allah. A spiritual wayfaring Sufi asked Imam al-Sadiq ('a), "Why are you wearing this fine cloth as if you are not 'Ali's ('a) child?" His Holiness' stated, "In the era of Imam 'Ali the people were living in poverty and want; for this reason, it was necessary for the Imam of the Muslims to live a simple life so that the people might not get dejected and depressed as a result of their poverty. But when the people are living in prosperity and abundance, the righteous are more entitled to derive benefit from graces than the others."

When the conditions necessitate, Muslims ought to pursue advancement in technology and

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۱- Surat al-Jathiyah ۴۵:۲۳.

change in their ways of life so as to preserve the dignity of the Muslims in the face of the infidels. In addition, if the Muslims do not pursue progress, advancement and development in arts and technology which are needed in a civilized and advanced

society, they will be obliged to extend their begging hands to the unbelievers and this will be a cause of lowliness for them.

From a social point of view, if the Islamic community intends to content itself with merely using hand tools and the basic needs of transport and arm themselves with poor weapons and abstain from creativity and ingenuity with the belief that an Islamic community ought to be a simple and contented society, it will certainly fall under the dominion of the infidels and it will become a lowly, base and mean society and Allah, the Beneficent, does not approve that a divine society should be a captive and in need of the infidels, because:

... وَلَنْ يَجْعَلَ اللهُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلاً

"And Allah will by no means give the unbelievers a way against the believers."(1)

And it is Him who has restricted honor to Allah and the Noble Prophet (S) and the believers:

... وَللهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

"...and to Allah belongs might and to His Apostle and to the believers..."(2)

Considering that technological backwardness brings with it colonization and cultural invasion, endeavor in the direction of creativity and advancement of the Islamic ummah (community) is a divine duty which cannot be overlooked at whatever

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١- Surat al-Nisa ٤:١٤١.
٢- Surat al-Munafiqun ٦٣:٨.

pretext.

The repeated recommendations which the Noble Prophet (S) and the rest of the Infallible Imams ('a) have given in regard to acquisition of knowledge and arts are a true witness of this assertion; the Noble Prophet (S) states, "Seek knowledge even if it

is in China."(1) That is to say, the Muslims ought to learn every kind of knowledge .which is needed in the Islamic community

:At the end of this section, His Holiness states

O Abu Dharr! The plantation of the hereafter is good works and the plantation of the" ".world is wealth and children

If a person were a seeker of the hereafter, he ought to perform good works and if he) (.were a seeker of the world, he ought to chase after saving money

Lesson 17: The Effects of Crying for the Hereafter, the Broadness of a Believer's Heart and Piousness

point

Most of the Noble Prophet's (S) advices which have hitherto been examined have :been rotating on three axes

.Abstinence from love of the world and obsession with it .1

.Exhortation of invocation of Allah .2

.Humility and modesty and crying as a result of fear of Allah .3

In this section of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) once again explains the importance of crying as a result of fear of Allah and/or crying due to intense longing to perceive His beatific vision [liqa' Allah] and he embarks upon elucidating the importance of paying heed to the hereafter, keeping aloof from the world and curing the inner .conscience and abstaining from sanctimony

The Effects of Crying for the Hereafter

O Abu Dharr! The Lord has given me the news [saying], 'I swear upon My honor"

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ١, p. ١٧٧ -١

and glory that my slaves will never comprehend the reward of crying and its value. I have established palaces in the highest levels of paradise for those who shed tears ".'and no one will share it with them

As has been mentioned previously, the crying which the Noble Prophet has recommended is shedding tears as a result of fear of Allah and/or weeping due to the intensity of yearning to be admitted in the divine beatific presence of Allah. Even if these two sections of crying are desirable and play a vital role in awakening man and making heedful to Allah but still crying as a result of desiring to be admitted in the divine beatific presence of Allah is higher and calls for deep and profound knowledge which is not attainable save for a small group [among mankind], amongst the .(Infallibles ('a

Perceiving this fact that the saints [awliya'] of Allah ('a) and the Infallibles are enamored and in love with Allah and there is no pain for them comparable to the ache of separation and remoteness from their Beloved, by examining the supplications of the Imams ('a), we comprehend how much they used to weep and wail as a result of the pain of separation from their Beloved and how they used to hurt due to their .intense longing to be in the divine beatific presence of Allah

Supplications which have been narrated from Imam 'Ali ('a) and Imam al-Sajjad ('a) are a sign of the endless love of the

Infallible and Pure Ahl al-Bayt ('a) in regard to Allah. With consideration to these supplications, a section of the unlimited awareness and knowledge of the Infallibles .becomes manifest to us

Knowledge which caused those of pure birth, of pure breastfeeding and the models of mankind not to become heedless of the presence of their Lord even for a single moment and for the reason that they used to perceive Him as higher than everything

and believed that all things are under His power, they were only enamored by Him and this inner love-sickness would not for one moment leave them tranquil and calm. :Their supplications and invocations are themselves a sign of the pinnacle of this love

In Du‘a’ al-Kumayl, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) removes the curtain from his yearning to attain the divine beatific presence of Allah and believes that it is harder to bear remoteness :from Him than to bear the infernal hell and addresses his Lord thus

O Allah! My Lord and Master! I can bear your punishment, but how can I bear being" "?separated from Thee

And explaining his anguish in the case that he is separated from his Lord, he :continues

I swear upon Your glory O my Master! O my Lord! that if you lead me to hell with a" speaking tongue, I will wail and weep so loudly and sorrowfully and I will shout very much, and like a person who has lost his beloved, I cry bitterly as a result of "!remoteness from Thee

(Imam al-Sajjad (‘a

p: ٢٣٤

:states in the Du‘a’ Abu Hamzah

I ruined my life with procrastinations of deeds and postponements of duties and with" protracted hopes and now I have reached a stage where I have completely been driven to despair with regard to edification of character [and purification of the soul]. Therefore, who is in a worse and more ruined state than mine? Woe upon me if in this state I get led to the grave, which I have not made ready for myself and have not made it fine with good works. Why ought I not to cry when I do not know what the consequences of my actions are and now my soul deceives me and my days beguile "?me regardless that death has cast its shadow on me

It is because of the evaluative role of crying in cleansing the inner conscience of

ethical vices and shortcomings that the Noble Prophet (S) states that the virtue and reward which is derived from crying is more than what is derived without crying and .the people who cry shall attain stations which other people will not attain

:Abu Dharr asks who the most intelligent man is and the Noble Prophet (S) states

The most intelligent person is the one who thinks about death and prepares himself“ ”.for it more than anyone else

A person who has selected a course to traverse always sets his eyes on the destination if he is smart thinker and tries to arrive at the goal quicker. If a person becomes

p: ۲۳۵

inattentive along the way, becomes bewildered and perplexed along the way, he does not arrive at the destination in sound health. He who knows that the world is only a means of attaining the hereafter does not get deceived by the material attractions of .the earth and incessantly meditates about death and prepares himself for it

Therefore, when his death draws nigh, he goes to Allah with full hands and overflowing provisions but people who lose sight of the goal have not prepared produce and provisions for the hereafter setting out on a long journey without .provisions and necessities which is a very hard job

The Broadness of a Believer's Heart and Its Signs

”.O Abu Dharr! If the light shines in the heart, it becomes broad and spacious“

In the beginning, hearts are dark, then Allah adds His light to them and hearts become apt to receive that light. Once that light settles down, the heart's capacity to broaden increases. To cite an intelligible example, it is like a dry water-skin which expands when water is poured inside it and/or like a bladder which the more air they pump in it the more it enlarges. Therefore, a heart which has been broadened by the light of Allah has an increased capacity. (The purport of heart is not the piece of flesh beating

in our hearts, but heart in this discourse denotes a spiritual essence and a place of (.perception and the station of faith

Perhaps His Holiness' (S) intention is that the excessiveness of remembering death and preparedness to meet it

p: ۲۳۶

keeps the light of man's life burning and as a result of remembrance of death, a light is set in man's soul which does not let his pure natural disposition get contaminated by the darkness of sin and it is as a result of that same light that, in the words of the Noble Prophet (S), broadens and increases the capacity of man's soul in this sense that he perceives beyond this narrow world and concentrates on the everlasting .afterworld

For the reason that such a state is not intelligible to Abu Dharr, because this is not a matter susceptible to the senses so as to be felt by the physical senses, he asks the Noble Prophet (S) about the signs of a large heart. In response, His Holiness (S) cites :three signs of this state

The first sign of a broad heart is longing for the hereafter, in this sense that man .۱ overlooks the transient and perishable world and sets his eyes on the eternal world of the hereafter. In explanation of the meaning of 'anabah' (returning from committing sins and going back to Allah), the deceased Raghib Isfahani states, "Returning ".towards Allah implies going back to Him by means of repentance and good works

.The second sign of a large heart is abstaining from the deceiving world .۲

Once a believer concentrates on the everlasting world, he becomes vexed by this narrow world, which is why he detaches himself from the world and prepares to .depart from it

The House of

p: ۲۳۷

Pride [dar al-ghurur] is one of the names by which the world is called in the Glorious Qur'an. Pride denotes deception and trickery and because adornments and ornaments of the world deceive man and make him infatuated with it; that is why it is .called the House of Pride

Explaining the deception of the world, eminent people like 'Allamah Tabataba'i, may he reside in Allah's Garden of bliss, used to state that man has a natural object of desire, that is to say man's natural disposition has a lost treasure it is always trying to find. His primary destination is becoming close to Allah and in other words, attaining .absolute perfection

Even if he himself is not conscious of this but unconsciously he still moves towards absolute perfection. But sometimes he loses his main aim and as a result of this mistake selects the world as his main goal; in reality, he has become seduced by the adornments and ornaments of the world and imagines them to be his lost treasure; that is to say the world presents itself as the real goal and desirable object of desire .for man

As a result of this, he attains the world after a life of struggle and effort only to find out that it was not his natural object of desire and does not satiate his spiritual needs. For this reason, the world can be compared to the nipple of a breast-feeder which once put in the mouth of a hungry child

p: ٢٣٨

longing for breast milk will make it forget the mother's breast and finally realizes that .the breast-feeder does not satiate his need for his mother's milk

Yes, the world is nothing more than a mirage and the real object of man's desire is life giving water which springs from proximity to Allah and satiates his natural disposition. Even if he imagines the world to be his real object of desire—whether it is worldly ostentation in the form of a house and car or in the form of other earthly pleasures and attractions—but it has to be understood that with all its spaciousness and various gratifications and blessings, all are a means for attaining absolute perfection and the

.good pleasure of Allah, not the ultimate goal and natural object of desire

We conclude that a person whose heart is in chaotic darkness and has not been enlightened by the light of faith, heedlessness and darkness get erased from his soul and he clearly discerns the truth and does not fall into error. He only sets his heart on the hereafter and it is not possible, even for a moment, to give his heart to the world .because he knows that the world is not the right place to fall in love

.The third sign of a large heart is to get ready for death before handing over his soul .۳

When man is not obsessed with the world and is always meditating about the hereafter, he always has to be ready to

p: ۲۳۹

go back to the eternal Abode and attain his natural Object of desire. A person who knows that he has not been created for the world and the world is only a bridge of passage to the everlasting Abode zealously looks forward to the moment of gaining proximity to the divine presence of Allah. He impatiently tries to cross the bridge so as .to attain his ultimate goal

A state of impatience and hurriedness to attain the goal also appears for man in the world. Along the way as man is traveling in a car to a city, he wishes to arrive at the destination quicker. When his car overtakes all the other moving objects on the road, he becomes happy that he will arrive earlier than the others at the destination. Even if this is a childish fancy it still has its roots in man's natural disposition. When he knows that the destination is another place and he has no role to play in choosing the course and path, he tries to traverse the course faster so as to reach the goal which of .course is a reasonable matter

Therefore, a slave whose heart has become enlightened by Allah's light and whose eyes have become opened to the truth knows that the ultimate goal is the vicinity of the Truth and proximity to the divine presence of Allah and that the world is nothing more than a means; for this reason, he employs this means in order to arrive at the

destination and does not become calm as a result of yearning to arrive and longing to meet the Beloved, to the extent that he forgets the world altogether.

Piousness and Fleeing from Sanctimony and Hypocrisy

Warning Abu Dharr against hypocrisy and sanctimony, the Noble Prophet states:

“O Abu Dharr! Fear Allah but do not sanctimoniously manifest your dread of Allah to the people with the intention of attracting their respect while your heart meditates about performing sin.”

Hypocrisy denotes man manifesting his outward better than his inside and making apparent what is contrary to that which is hidden in the inner soul. That is to say:

His appearance resembles Abu Dharr and Salman [Farsi],

His inner soul resembles Abu Sufyan.

Sanctimony is considered as hidden polytheism and a sanctimonious person is called a polytheist.

One of the great graces of Allah concealing man’s sins and faults, as a result of which He has been called ‘the Hider of Faults’ [sattar al-‘uyub]. In truth, life would become unbearable if the vices of people were divulged and they perceived the faults of one another. It is for this reason that Allah’s concealing of defects is a great blessing for which being thankful is incumbent. Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states:

“If you were to perceive the secrets of one another, you would never bury one another.”(۱)

In the same way that Allah Himself conceals the faults of the believers, he does not give permission to the others to reveal the sins of other people; neither does He Himself discredit a believer nor does He allow a believer to

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۷, p. ۳۸۵ -۱

disgrace himself. Therefore, man has no right to divulge his sins to other people. It has been recorded in a hadith that Allah has not allowed the believers to demean and debase themselves; naturally there is no meanness worse than sinning and corruption; it is for this reason that as soon as a believer sins, Allah sets a covering over that sin and does not allow the sinner himself to remove the covering from his sin .and gives him the opportunity to repent

Of course, this is not a general rule, because sometimes on the basis of His wisdom and in order to discipline people, Allah, the Exalted, divulges a bit of their sins and removes the covering from their secrets. Revealing their secrets is a means of training them. That is to say, in the case that he does not get corrected no matter how much he is warned and cautioned over his ugly works, the best way to awaken and train him is to disgrace him a bit so as to prevent him from committing further vices. Of course, this is an existential matter and is related to Allah and His control and no .man has the right to disgrace others on the pretext of correcting them

Therefore, from the Islamic perspective no person has the permission to disgrace neither himself nor other people; concealing and hiding personal defects is a duty of all the believers. Sometimes, the punishment of divulging sins is higher than sin itself and revealing sins

:is considered as one of the delicate instances of spreading corruption

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَهُ فِى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِى الدُّنْيا وَالآخِرَهِ وَاللهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ

Surely (as for) those who love that scandal should speculate respecting those who“ believe, they shall have a grievous chastisement in this world and the hereafter, and (Allah knows, while you do not know.”(۱

Like scandal-mongering, sanctimony and outward adornment too is an ugly thing; it is

unacceptable for man to portray himself as better than how he actually is. In spite of being a sinner and wrong-doer, he tries to portray himself as a man of piety, faith, fear of Allah and supplication and invocation so that the people may accord him .respect

Shaddad ibn Aws and 'Ibadah ibn Samit narrate that in interpretation of the ayat, "Say: I am a mortal like you; it is revealed to me that your god is one God, therefore whoever hopes to meet his Lord, he should do good deeds, and not join anyone in the :service of his Lord"(۲), the Noble Prophet (S) states

"A person who prays and fasts out of sanctimony and hypocrisy is a polytheist."(۳)

The Intention and Its Role in the Evaluation of Works

"O Abu Dharr! Make an intention for every one of your works, even eating and ".sleeping

From the viewpoint of edification of character, mentioning this matter is very important and constructive and in addition, this matter is founded on a very important scientific and philosophical axiom which calls for detailed discussion. The value of every work

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۱- Surat al-Nur ۲۴:۱۹.
۲- Surat al-Kahf ۱۸:۱۱۰.
۳- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۸۴, p. ۲۴۸.

which man discharges, even worship and adoration of Allah, is related to the intention: the evaluation of one action performed as a result of two differing intentions is not the .same

A person who accepts his friend's invitation positively does a praiseworthy work, but his action is considered as worship which gives fruit to reward and profit if he accepts the invitation and goes to the house of his friend with the intention to please Allah

because Allah is pleased to see the believers accepting the invitations of their fellow .[believing brothers [and having good relations

Or, he is fasting a recommendable fast and one of his friends, ignorant of this fact, invites him to partake of food; in the case that he breaks his fast for the sake of pleasing Allah, his action is considered as worship and gives fruit to divine reward and profit; but if he breaks his fast for the reason that he is pleased with the food and longs for it, his action has no reward because it was not done for the good pleasure of Allah. Therefore, this very eating has divine reward and profit if it is done for the sake of pleasing Allah and has an invaluable role in the perfection and spiritual ascendance .of man

Therefore, heed has to be paid to this fact that man can discharge all his daily works, starting from trivial actions such as sleeping, eating, looking, and even joking up to the more important actions such

p: ۲۴۴

as prayer and fasting for the good pleasure of Allah in the case that they are .discharged in the direction of servitude and obedience of Allah

Some of the great people used to pause a while before doing anything they wanted to do until they got sure that their intention was purely for the good pleasure of Allah and they were certain that the work has been performed for Allah. Or, if a question was asked of them, they never responded with haste and before reflecting a little and purifying the intention in their hearts. Then, they used to give the response for the .good pleasure of Allah

This point is indicative of the fact that a believer can be so smart and sharp that he can make every single moment of his lifespan in the course of Allah and His good pleasure. Therefore, it is as well possible to have a pure and correct intention in regard to pleasures of the flesh, actions which both give pleasure and are acts of .worship at the same time

Man can attain both the pleasures of the world and the gratifications of the hereafter. In such instances a medium between the world and the hereafter is possible. It is in cases that there is incompatibility between two actions that a medium cannot be found, for example between the obligatory [wajib] works and the forbidden [haram] actions for which a medium is impossible. But if man has a divine intention in doing permissible actions, he

p: ۲۴۵

attains both the pleasure of this world thereby increasing his bodily energy and vigor and brings to hand divine reward and profit. Of course, the divine intention itself has stages and one of its stages is a firm decision to abstain from sin and quit .disobedience of Allah's will

The deceased 'Allamah Tabataba'i, may he reside in Allah's Garden of bliss, used to narrate that whenever Imam 'Ali ('a) woke up to pray the optional night prayers [nafilah], he used to take a cold bath in order to increase his physical vigor and .preparedness

It is natural for a person such as Imam 'Ali ('a) who from morning to night was at the battlefront or was busy doing some other social duties in addition to performing five hundred and/or one thousand rak'ats of prayer to be exhausted and not to have enough energy and vigor for waking up at night to pray. It is for this reason that .taking a cold bath increases his energy, vigor and liveliness

Lesson ۱۸: Honoring the Divine Majesty and Splendor of Allah

point

O Abu Dharr! The majesty and splendor of the Lord of creation ought to increase and" do not remember Him lightly as do the ignorant and unenlightened who when they ".'see the dog and pig say, 'O Allah! Suffocate and choke it to death

The Status of Invocation of Allah in the Qur'an and the Hadiths

The subject of discourse in this section is remembrance of Allah and honoring His

majesty. A great deal of importance has been accorded to invocation of Allah in the Glorious Qur'an and hadiths, to the extent that topics like

incentives for remembrance of Allah, the worldly and heavenly benefits of invocation of Allah, the quantity and quality of imploration of Allah, the place and time of supplication of Allah have all been examined in detail.

Likewise, explications have been made by the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and religious scholars with regard to which one between invocation with words and invocation with the heart is more important and higher and/or which one is better between supplication in secret solitude and imploration in a public and populous place.

In one hadith, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"There has not been a nation and people who gathered and forsook invoking Allah and remembering us save that they will reap regret on the Day of Resurrection."

And he also stated:

"Remembrance of us is tantamount to remembrance of Allah."(۱)

Explicating the importance of invocation and remembrance of Allah, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"Holy and glorified is your Lord; Allah who is the Mighty and Matchless and is remote from the ignorant description of creatures, and peace and blessings of Allah be upon the prophets ('a), and praise is especially reserved for Allah who is the Creator of the world."(۲)

Therefore, man has to always preserve a state of remembrance of Allah on his tongue and in his heart and this invocation is not confined to a special place, gathering and time. It has been recorded in a sacredly inspired hadith that Prophet Moses ('a) asked, "O My Lord! I feel shy to invoke Your name with my tongue in certain places and

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۲, p. ۴۶۸, Beirut print -۱

.Usul al-Kafi (with Farsi translation), vol. ۴, p. ۲۵۴, hadith ۳ -۲

states and hence to remember You." Allah stated, "Invoking My Name in every state is ".good

All these emphases and recommendations to remember and invoke the divine name of Allah are in regard to the role which they play in keeping man aloof from ethical vices and shortcomings and propelling him towards prosperity and well-being, because man abstains from issues which are not compatible with the good pleasure of Allah and he withholds the soul from disobedience if he is always preoccupied with .the invocation of Allah and perceives himself as being in the divine presence of Allah

All the problems and errors which occur as a result of seductions of the carnal soul and the Devil are caused by negligence of invocation of Allah and His punishment and requital. In addition to that, forgetfulness of Allah darkens the heart and consequently the Devil and carnal soul overcome man. In contrast, remembrance and recollection of the divine presence of Allah gives rise to the cleansing and purification of the soul from vices and man's liberation from the shackles of the appetitive soul. In that case, the heart becomes a manifestation of the Beloved and love of the world, which is the .fountainhead of all errors and deviations, departs from the soul

:In a hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states

Know that the best and the most proper of your works before Allah and the most" sublime of them in your levels and the best thing on which the sun shines is invocation

of Allah, because Allah has thus stated with regard to Himself, 'I am a Companion of one who remembers Me'."(۱)

:In another hadith, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states

The Honored and Glorified Allah states, 'I grant to whoever lags behind at asking" issues in regard to Me because of invocation more than I grant to the one who asks (with respect to Me'."(۲)

:(Allah told Prophet Jesus ('a

O Jesus! Remember Me in solitude so that I may remember you before Myself, and" remember Me in a group of men so that I may remember you in a group better than that of men (ie the angels). O Jesus! Soften your heart for Me and remember Me abundantly in solitude and know that what pleases Me is your submission in respect to (Me. Keep your heart alive for this work and do not be dead (i.e. sad and dejected)."(۳)

The emphasis of the Qur'an and its attention to invocation of Allah has reached the extent that prayer in the Qur'an has been introduced as invocation of Allah, with regard to the fact that in Islam prayer has a high status and has been known as a :pillar of religion

... وَأَقِمِ الصَّلوةَ لِذِكْرِی

(and keep up prayer for My remembrance."(۴..."

For the reason the aim is more important than the means, it can be inferred from this verse that invocation of Allah is more important than prayer and in truth prayer is a means of remembering Allah; (in reality, from the viewpoint of the Qur'an, invocation

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۱- 'Iddah al-Wa'i, p. ۲۳۸.

۲- Usul al-Kafi (with Farsi translation), vol. ۴, p. ۲۶۱, hadith ۱.

۳- Ibid., p. ۲۶۴, hadith ۳.

۴- Surat Ta Ha ۲۰:۱۴.

of Allah has a purport and reality for which prayer, in spite of all the value it has, is considered as nothing more than a means.) The question is that how possible is it for what embodies all the invocations and even some of the ayats and special works and

?movements to be a means of remembrance of Allah

In explanation of this point, it ought to be said that prayer is not considered as invocation of Allah because of the shape and form and movements and activities which it has but invocation is a condition of the heart and is an inward attention and is a connection between the heart of man and the divine Essence of Allah. Therefore, man prays so as to give rise to that attention of the heart and inward connection. Therefore, prayer is itself a means and the goal is attention and connection of the heart which is doubtlessly more honorable than prayer itself.

The Quantity and Quality of Invocation of Allah

One of the issues mentioned in the Qur'an and the hadiths is the quality and quantity of Allah. Some verses in the Qur'an lay emphasis on the quantity and abundance of invocation of Allah; like the verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا

"O you who believe! Remember Allah, remembering frequently..."(1)

(In this ayat emphasis has been laid on the abundance of invocation.)

It has been recorded in some of the hadiths that there is a determined limit for everything, even for prayer too there is a fixed limit: it has

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1- Surat al-Ahzab ٣٣:٤١.

been made incumbent upon every adult person competent to undertake religious duties to pray seventeen rak'ats in five turns a day and it is recommended to optionally pray twice the number of obligatory rak'ats per day, or the incumbency of the hajj (pilgrimage to the House of Allah) once in a life time upon every adult and economically able person. Therefore, there is a limit specified for everything, except the invocation and remembrance of Allah for which there is no limit. However, much

.man invokes the divine name of Allah, it is still insufficient

In contrast to the first section of the ayats and hadiths, there is a section of the verses of the Qur'an and hadiths which lay stress on the quality of invocation of the divine name of Allah, amongst them the verse:

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمْ مَنَاسِكَكُمْ فَاَذْكُرُوا اللهَ كَذِكْرِكُمْ آبَاءَكُمْ أَوْ أَشَدَّ ذِكْرًا...

"So when you have performed your devotions, then laud Allah as you lauded your fathers, rather a greater lauding..."(١)

It is not commanded in this ayat to invoke Allah a lot, but it states that invoke Allah greater [or more intensely]. Therefore, the frequency and infrequency of invocation of Allah is not under consideration but rather its weakness and strength and this is related to neither invocation with words nor invocation by the tongue. The purport is not to thicken or weaken the words of invocations, but the attention of the heart.

At the footnote of this verse, the deceased 'Allamah Tabataba'i states that the custom of

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١- Surat al-Baqarah ٢:٢٠٠.

the Arabs during the Age of Ignorance was to engage in praising and lauding their fathers after the hajj in the area of Mina. But after the advent of Islam, Allah gave orders that this custom should be brought to an end and invocation of Allah should take its place.

In this verse, invocation has been described as strong; this makes it known that in the same way that the amount of invocation of Allah is capable of increasing, it is also capable of strengthening in regard to quality. In addition, invocation of Allah is not a matter of words, but of the heart and is performed with the presence of heart and words are its explanation.(١)

All too often, we confine invocation of Allah to the tongue [and words], when invocation of Allah is recommended, we imagine that invocation implies [just] saying 'al-hamdulillah' and the Four Praises [tasbihat-i arba'ah] and others of this kind; in the case that all these words are indicative of invocation and in reality the imploration which has been emphasized and recommended is that which goes with remembrance .and attention of the heart

That is to say, man ought to be mindful of Allah at the time of performing duties and obligations, so that he may discharge his duties along with perceiving His divine presence and also at the time of abstaining from sin, man ought to remember Allah so .that the perception of Him may cause his forsaking sin

The connection between invocation of

p: ۲۵۲

.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۲, p. ۸۱ -۱

Allah by words and invocation by the tongue and the relationship between the word and the meaning is like the relationship of the skin of the fruit with its core. In reality, invocation by words is a dress for invocation by the heart and invocation by the heart .is the core of the fruit

Therefore, invocations by words are a pre-requisite to the remembrance of Allah by the heart and inner soul and have to certainly be an object of attention. It is for this reason that the numbers and instances of invocations have been specified, like the .supplications which have been specified as the invocations after prayer

The Relationship between Invocation with Words and Invocation with the Heart

It is necessary here to give more explanations in regard to the relationship between invocation with words and invocation with the heart and also to demonstrate why so much emphasis has been laid on imploration of Allah, to the extent that it has been put forward as the goal of prayer. Basically, what role does invocation of Allah have in the life, prosperity and perfection of man? Do those who do not invoke Allah in their

?lives and are not attentive to Him earn less in life and fail

When we speak and utter words on the tongue, we have imagined a meaning for that word previously and our aim of speaking is to make known and comprehensible to the others that meaning. Usually, speaking is for the reason of presenting the purport and intention even if sometimes the meaning of words and

speaking is not to show a purport but to suggest special psychological issues and offer .private spiritual instruction

One of the recommendations which psychologists and psychotherapists have emphasized in connection with their work is private spiritual instruction, for which, of course, they have selected special words and phrases, so that private instruction may produce effects; like when they say that you ought to sit in solitude and raise your voice to a specified level and repeat a particular sentence [for a stipulated number of times] so as to be effective in the soul. These instances are exceptional and usually man conceives a meaning when he speaks and then after presents it to the other people. A reasonable person does not say anything without visualizing the meaning .and intention of their words, because words are indicative of meanings

At the time of pronouncing invocations with words, like the Four Praises [tasbihat-i arba'ah], for which we imagine the meaning and this word is indicative and suggestive of that intention, the intention is not to inculcate that meaning to Allah, the Exalted, and/or the angels and other people, because we have no intention of conversation and dialogue but we want that meaning to have an effect in our hearts. Therefore, the effect is derived from the meaning and the words are nothing more than just a .means

When we say Allah-u Akbar (Allah is Great), and we take it as a divine work, our intention is the effects of the meaning of that invocation in the

soul of man and his prosperity, otherwise words and letters devoid of meaning are nothing but sounds which emerge out of the tongue, it is for this reason that .meaningful words have to be used in invocation of Allah

We conclude that before uttering invocation with words, a preparatory level of remembrance of Allah appears in man, thereafter a higher level of invocation of the divine name of Allah appears. When man is reciting invocations of Allah, he initially is reminded of Allah; (otherwise, if he completely becomes negligent of Allah, he does not undertake to invoke the divine name of Allah); no matter how weak man's attention might be, he becomes aware of Allah before invocation of the name of Allah and thereafter recites an invocation which is indicative of the remembrance of Allah. .Therefore, before invocation of Allah a level of the remembrance of Allah appears

Two Benefits of Invocation with Words

The first benefit and goal of invocation of Allah with words is to strengthen that weak stage of remembrance of Allah so that man's attention may be fixed on Allah. In the beginning, he had an obscure attention or his attention was scattered but with the help of invocation with words, especially prayer, that attention becomes strong, concentrated and directed at Allah; this is one of the benefits which can be cited for .invocation

The second benefit of invocation with words is that if that weak level of invocation of Allah with words does not become strong, at least it becomes permanent and

p: ۲۵۵

does not disappear. Man's states and attentions, amongst them the remembrance of Allah, are always in a state of change and transformation and in the danger of disappearing. It is for this reason that the help of invocation with words has to be sought for the permanence and continuity of that attention of the heart, so that they do not forget the remembrance of Allah. Therefore, two benefits and aims can be cited for invocation of the divine name of Allah and of course the first benefit and goal .is higher and better

Sometimes, it happens that invocation of Allah with words produces no benefits and that occurs in the case that it becomes and idle habit and futile utterances of the tongue to which man pays no attention, like the rest of the habits of the tongue and actions which people exude without the least attention to that habit. Some people continually turn the prayer beads without paying the least attention to the praises they are reciting and their benefit. Or some people who have become accustomed to playing with their fingers and/or beards and moustaches. In regard to habits of the tongue, some children get accustomed to making certain words involuntarily flow on .their tongues without paying the least attention to them

For most of us reciting supplications and invocations has become a dry habit and we do not pay the least attention to the purport of what we recite. It is for this reason that they do not give

p: ۲۵۶

rise to any effect and transformation in our hearts. It is possible that we initially begin an action and start reciting an invocation with attention, as we have heard in a hadith that for example that reciting the invocations of Fatimah ('a) or a certain other invocation brings to hand a certain amount of reward, for this reason we begin reciting this invocation with attention of the heart initially but gradually our attention decreases to the extent that those words become uttered out of habit and without any attention to it. Of course, saying invocations like 'Allah-u Akbar (Allah is Great)', 'La ilaha illa Allah (There is no god save Allah)', even without attention, is better than pronouncing vain and ugly words but they still do not give rise to a desirable spiritual .effect

There have been people who did not have the least belief in God but used to mention the name of God out of habit and this action has become a form of custom among them. There were communists here in Iran who did not have the least belief in Allah and the transcendental cosmos but at the time of separating, according to habit and custom, and out of respect for one another, used to say, 'khuda-hafiz (may God be your protector)' without paying the least attention to its meaning. In the same way

that pronouncing the name of Allah has become a habit and custom for some of us the Muslims, and we do not pay the

p: ٢٥٧

.least attention to its meaning and purport

Among the Ignorant Arabs and likewise the Arabs who lived at the advent of Islam and had recently reverted to Islam, it was a very prevalent custom among them to pronounce the name of Allah. Whenever they saw a dog or pig, they used to say, "May Allah suffocate or choke it" without having the least attention to the meaning and purport of the words. This was just a habit which was devoid of conviction of the heart. Certainly, these words do not leave any impression in man and are not .considered as remembrance of Allah

In this hadith, the Noble Prophet advises Abu Dharr that when you want to praise and glorify Allah, first imagine His greatness and majesty. Remember that the name of Allah, who is the Creator of the whole world and in whose powerful Hands lie everything, has unlimited greatness and glory in the same way that He himself has boundless greatness and glory. It is for this reason that He ought to be remembered with greatness and glory. This occurs in the case that your heart and soul perceives the greatness of Allah, as a result of which you pronounce His name with humility and submissiveness. You ought not to be like those Ignorant people who used to .pronounce the name of Allah without paying the least attention to the meaning

Invocation leaves an effect in the heart and soul of man, becomes the cause of tranquility and

p: ٢٥٨

the goal of performing the prayers, the cause of man's spiritual ascendance and growth of the soul, and becomes the cause of forsaking vain materialistic thoughts and looking forward to the eternal world and the encompassing blessings of Allah, becomes the cause of a strong connection between man and Allah which is

pronounced with attention to the meaning and purport of the invocation and keeping in mind the divine presence of Allah. This is that same invocation in praise of which Allah says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ...

“Those only are believers whose hearts become full of fear when Allah is mentioned...”(۱)

At the end there is room for us to quote the words of Imam ‘Ali’s (‘a) description in regard to the standard of the invocation and remembrance of Allah:

“I have seen the companions of the Prophet (S) but I do not find anyone resembling them. They begun the day with dust on the hair and face (in hardships of life) and passed the night in prostration and standing in prayers. Sometimes, they put down their forehead and sometimes their cheeks. With the recollection of their resurrection it seemed as though they stood on live coal. It seemed that in between their eyes there were signs like knees of goats, resulting from long prostrations. When Allah was mentioned, their eyes flowed freely till their shirt collars were drenched. They trembled for fear of punishment and hope of reward as the tree trembles on a stormy day.”(۲)

p: ۲۵۹

۱- Surat al-Anfal ۸:۲.

۲- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۲۸۶, sermon [khutbah] ۹۶, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

Lesson ۱۹: The Greatness of Allah’s Status in the Viewpoint of the Angels

point

“O Abu Dharr! Allah has angels who as a result of fear of Him have their heads permanently bowed [in submission] while standing on their feet up to the Day of Resurrection. Then they all say, ‘Purity and praise are for you, we did not worship you as you deserved to be adored.”

We have previously discussed invocation and remembrance of Allah. It has been said that invocation of Allah ought to be done as a result of humility, modesty and with the presence of heart; not as a result of habit and futile utterances of the tongue. Now, the discourse regards what things play a role in bringing about attention and presence of heart at the time of invocation of the divine name of Allah. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) embarks upon explicating the point which has excellent effects in bringing about attention to Allah and perceiving his divine .presence at the time of invocation of the name of Allah

The Role of Arousing Hope and Fear

In a natural way, man's motivation in regard to volitional works is hope for reward and fear of harm; of course the realm of reward and harm is very wide: for some people the reward lies in these same worldly benefits and material facilities and for some people reward and benefit belong to the hereafter. In the same way, some material and worldly losses are taken into consideration and for some people losses and divine punishment of the hereafter are taken into consideration. Higher than these

two types, for the saints [awliya'] of Allah, reward lies in perceiving the presence of Allah and deriving benefit and the pleasure of Allah and their loss lies in being .deprived of that prosperity and perfection

Their fear is in respect to being deprived of the beatific presence of Allah and without the least doubt this fear is more than the fear of other people in regard to the losses of the world and the hereafter is higher. Of course, the reality of this issue is not known to us and is far from our comprehension; we briefly deduce from the ayats [verses of the Qur'an] and hadiths there is such fear as well. (We hope Allah, the Exalted, will grant us the grace and aptitude to perceive this meaning by means of).(deriving benefit from the enlightening words of the Ahl al-bayt ('a

For every reason fear of Allah and/or fear of harm which appears by means of man

himself and can be repelled by Allah causes man to attain deeper attention and in the same way eagerness for reward and profit and that which Allah grants to His slave, or eagerness for being in the beatific divine presence also gives rise to more attention .and presence of heart

Even if for a lot of people fear plays a greater role in arousing and compelling them to action and freeing them from negligence and making them perceive the danger and harm. Every person can test himself as to whether they

p: ۲۶۱

become more impelled to take action by listening to fearful news which foretells extra .danger and harm for them or hope and reward

For us endeavor to repel harm is more important than attracting reward. Perhaps, this very point has become the cause that the Glorious Qur'an pays more heed to warning and premonition than it does to giving good news and tidings and the prophets (S) have been introduced as warners. In some ayats the prophets ('a) have :been introduced as both warners and givers of glad tidings, like the ayat

... فَبَعَثَ اللهُ النَّبيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنْذِرِينَ...

(So Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners..."(۱..."

And very few instances are found where the Prophets ('a) have been introduced as bearers of good tidings [bashir or mubashshir] but the title of warners [nadhir] has :been employed alone in a lot of instances, like the verse

تَكَادُ تَمَيَّزُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ كُلَّمَا أُلْقِىَ فِيهَا فَوْجٌ سَأَلَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَذِيرٌ

Almost bursting for fury; whenever a group is cast into it, its keeper shall ask them:" (did there not come to you a warner?"(۲

Emphasis on the prophets ('a) being warners is because their warnings leave more) (.effect in the hearts of the people than their glad tidings

Fear of Allah is one of the states having a lot of benefits for man, especially if it becomes a stable habit and as has been mentioned, one of its benefits and effects is remembrance and deep attention to Allah. Even if there is no

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.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۱۳ -۱

.Surat al-Mulk ۶۷:۸ -۲

room for delving in this discourse deeper, but still we will hint at certain issues in order to bring about more comprehension of the hadiths which have been narrated in regard to fear of Allah and also bringing about a deeper effect of fear of Allah in the .heart and soul

The Essence of Fear and Dread of Allah

One of the questions which are treated is what the reality of fear is and what causes play a role in giving rise to it and what effects does it leaves behind? Do fear and awe differ from one another? These discussions largely involve lexical aspects; in order to comprehend fear and awe of Allah and the difference between these two, a lot of ayats and hadiths will be discussed. With regard to the application of fear and awe in the ayats and hadiths, there is no considerable difference to be noticed and in some .instances these two have been used interchangeably

Once man has perceived and felt the greatness of Allah, a feeling of self-abasement, servility, humility and modesty appears in him. This state and psychological reaction has been embedded in the nature of man. (Of course, this state and reaction is not confined to man, the other living creatures also have this feeling vis-à-vis those that are stronger than them.) Usually, this state is also called awe and in reality fear is employed in place of awe. When man perceives the greatness of another one, even if he poses no danger and harm to him, he feels

.in himself the feeling of humility and lowliness, as if he has lost his being

Sometimes, fear denotes fear of harm which is directed at man—usually fear has been used in this sense—naturally the application of fear in regard to Allah implies dread of the divine retribution and requital which are likely to be earned as a result of .man's bad works

With regard to the saints [awliya'] of Allah and people who have attained higher levels of servitude and obedience of Allah, their fear sometimes arises as a result of paying heed to the majesty of Allah and sometimes due to the possibility of being deprived of the beatific vision of Allah [liqa' Allah] because the beatific vision of Allah and presence in his divine realm is not a definite and certain matter and is likely to either disappear .or never occur at all

Therefore, attention to this meaning causes the appearance of fear of Allah in the saints [awliya'] of Allah because the honor of being in the beatific presence of Allah and being accepted in His divine presence is the greatest perfection and prosperity and man's hope is to attain divine knowledge and the greatest gratification for him is feeling that he is in the presence of Allah. A bit further than that level, we perceive how much the happiness of Allah brings pleasure to faith. A friend who feels that his beloved is happy and pleased with him fears lest he becomes deprived of that ,happiness

p: ۲۶۴

.pleasure and love of his beloved

This is the highest kind of fear and dread for a person who has attained love. Lower than that is fear as a result of divine retribution and requital of the hereafter which is .the meaning intended in most of the ayats and hadiths

This stage plays an intermediary role for attaining higher levels because for us who up to now have not attained higher levels of awareness, this medium level of fear of Allah becomes the cause of our being heedless to the world and its pleasures and is itself a cause for abstaining from sins and keeping aloof from worldly contaminations; of course, this is not a small thing that in man exists an inward cause for abstaining

.and fleeing from obsession with the world and sins

For people who have low objectives, fear of Allah denotes dread of worldly problems and encumbrances. Fear lest Allah inflicts them with disease, or lest they lose their dignity and become lowly, and lose the respect of people and/or fear lest they lose their beloved one. (For people who have faith in Allah, dread of becoming entangled in problems and afflictions and dejections is a kind of fear of Allah and in short is (.desirable and most of the prophets' ('a) warnings intend this type of fear of Allah

The Benefit and Status of Fear of Allah

This discussion concerns the desirability and benefits of fear of Allah. What value and benefit has fear of Allah got so as to be so much recommended that

man ought to endeavor to attain the station of fear and know its course? The reality is that a lot of people have not comprehended the good qualities and benefits of fear. Even if they know that a lot of verses of the Qur'an have been revealed in regard to fear of Allah and that people who are fearful of Allah have been praised but still they do not know what benefit and gain there is in fear of Allah. Once mention of the states of fear of the prophets ('a) and the saints [awliya'] of Allah and the front-men of religion is made, they surprisingly ask as to why ought man to be so fearful and cry so ?!much that his eyes get damaged and gus face injured

It has been narrated in regard to John the Baptist, in whom the station of fear of Allah had appeared and manifested more than the other prophets ('a), that he used to cry so much that his eyes and face used to get injured, to the extent that his mother used to bandage the sores on his face so as to reduce the pain caused by flowing tears. When man hears these incidents, he gets amazed that why ought a Prophet of Allah ('a) to fear so much!? If amongst us a person was in such a state and fears this much, if we do not say that he is mad, then at least we affirm that his state is not normal

!and not natural

If we look at the verses of the Qur’an with the intention of taking lesson and admonition, we gather that fear of Allah has been introduced as a condition for deriving benefit from the admonitions of the prophets (S) and attaining prosperity.

إِنَّمَا تُنْذِرُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الذِّكْرَ وَخَشِيَ الرَّحْمَنَ بِالْغَيْبِ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِمَغْفِرَةٍ وَأَجْرٍ كَرِيمٍ

“You can only warn him who follows the reminder and fears the Beneficent God in secret; so announce to him forgiveness and an honorable reward.”(١)

In this ayat, Allah advises the Noble Prophet (S) to direct his calling and guidance at people who fear Allah in the hearts and whose natural dispositions have not yet been completely contaminated by sin, wrong doing and obscurities. This type of people benefits from the calling and directives of the prophets, not that person who has no fear and dread of Allah perpetrates sin audaciously and without any guilty feelings at all. Without the least doubt, his heart is dark and is harder than the rock and there is no aperture in his inner soul for the penetration of light and brightness.

In another verse, Allah states:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَى * فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى

“And as for him who fears to stand in the presence of his Lord and forbids the soul from low desires, then surely the Garden—that is the abode.”(٢)

Definitely fear is contrasted with hope and optimism, and Allah states, “And as for him who fears to stand in

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١- Surat Ya Sin ٣۶:١١.

٢- Surat al-Nazi‘at ٧٩:۴٠-۴١.

the presence of his Lord”, He does not state that “as for him who hopes to stand in the presence of his Lord”; this show that fear of Allah results in preventing the

disobedience of the carnal soul and setting foot on the course of guidance and hope in the mercy of Allah has no effect in this regard.

In another verse, Allah states that after the high station and status of the people of faith and good works, paradise and its blessings are especially reserved for those who fear Allah:

جَزَاؤُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِی مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِینَ فِیهَا أَبَدًا رَضِیَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذَلِکَ لِمَنْ خَشِیَ رَبَّهُ

"...Their reward with their Lord is gardens of perpetuity beneath which rivers flow, abiding therein forever; Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him, that is for him who fears his Lord."(1)

In another verse, fear, dread, humility, submissiveness and self-abasement in the presence of Allah has been mentioned as one of the most delicate qualities of the scholars of religion:

... إِنَّمَا یَخْشَی اللهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ...

"...those of His servants who are possessed of knowledge fear Allah..."(2)

In another instance, Allah warns the Muslims against fear of the oppressors and orders them to fear Him:

... فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِی وَلِأُتِمَّ نِعْمَتِی عَلَیْکُمْ وَلَعَلَّکُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

"...so do not fear them, and fear Me; that I may complete my favor on you and that you may walk on the right course."(3)

In another place, he states:

إِنَّمَا ذَلِکُمْ

1- Surat al-Bayyinah ۹۸:۸.

.Surat Fatir ٣٥:٢٨ -٢

.Surat al-Baqarah ٢:١٥٠ -٣

الشَّيْطَانُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيائَهُ فَلاَ تَخَافُوهُمْ وَخَافُونَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

It is only the Satan that causes you to fear from his friends, but do not fear them, and“ (fear Me if you are believers.”(١)

The Status of the Fear of the Leaders and Saints [Awliya’] of Allah

A brief look at the invaluable role of fear of Allah and the praise that has been made in regard to it makes us comprehend why the saints [awliya’] of Allah used to preserve the highest level of this state in themselves, by studying the states of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Pure Imams (‘a) we come across amazing states which if one or two hadiths had been narrated about them, there was room for man to doubt the existence of those states but they have not been narrated once or twice, on the contrary a lot of hadiths have been narrated in a successive way or with unbroken chains of transmission in regard to these states, to the extent that whenever we remember the personality of Imam ‘Ali (‘a), our minds are associated with his weeping and wailing and implorations and it is not possible at all to imagine Imam ‘Ali (‘a) without having an image of fear of Allah and also it is not possible at all to remember Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) without the state of fear and dread of Allah. The Du‘a’ Abu Hamzah al-Thumali and the rest of his supplications are delicate cases in point and are indicative of the existence of his extraordinary fear of Allah which is unimaginable .for us

It

.Surat Al ‘Imran ٣:١٧٥ -١

has been narrated in a hadith that at the time of performing the ritual ablution, the state of Imam ‘Ali used to undergo change and his entire being used to shake. Likewise, it has been narrated in regard to Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (‘a) that

whenever he came close to the mosque, the color of his cheeks used to change and his body used to tremble at the time of saying the inaugural phrase of prayer Allah-u Akbar. Likewise, the rest of the Infallibles and Fatimah al-Zahra' ('a) were like this in .the presence of Allah

All this diligence in regard to keeping alive the quality of fear of Allah in the inner conscience and recommendation to it and manifestation and appearance of this state in the conduct of the leaders of religion is because of the invaluable role of fear of Allah in the formation, perfection and spiritual ascendance of man in his attainment of the course of direction and servitude. Without doubt, there are various effects and .benefits depending on the levels of fear

When we examine our psychological states, we gather that there is a certain limit of fear of Allah in us and we perceive its special benefits, but when we examine the states of people who have attained higher awareness and have gone a step further than us in knowledge of Allah and have attained perfection, we gather that their fear and dread of Allah was different in form and so were the effects and benefits

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.different

Of course, explaining the station of fear of Allah and its nature and effects is problematic and in order for this topic to become clearer, mentioning this point that when man perceives a great thing vis-à-vis himself, it gives him a state under whose auspices he feels that he has lost his being and does not see his being any more. In other words, when man feels a greatness, he melts in it; like ice which melts under the rays of the sun. This melting and forgetting himself is an effect and special state which .appears as a result of perceiving the greatness of Allah

With regard to the previous discussions and issues about which books of ethics and mystics have been written, man attains perfection once he feels in himself utmost lowliness, self-abasement and humility in the face of Allah, the Exalted, and His endless majesty. The mystics have called this state the station of complete denial of

the self or the station of annihilation; in this case man no longer perceives himself and once he sees himself no longer, he perceives Allah and His greatness. In technical .terms, he comprehends that besides attachment nothing else exists

Even if this talk is interesting and admirable but still the truth is that only a few people have ever attained this station and we have a long distance with that level. We ought not to think that our problem will be solved by learning a few terms; our problem will only

be solved by perceiving realities and under the auspices of servitude and obedience .(of Allah and following the way of the Infallible and Pure Ahl al-Bayt ('a

We ought to try to take steps along their course and give room to rays of their attentions, fear and dread of theirs in our hearts, so that as a result of the capability and aptitude that we have we may draw nearer to Allah. Attention to those high stations and acknowledgement of their existence is beneficial to us, on the condition that we ought not to become proud and not imagine that we have attained those .stations

The Perfection of Man and the Feeling of Humility and Lowliness in Regard to Allah

Therefore, the perfection of man draws nearer when he melts in the face of Allah and does not see any autonomy for himself and perceives himself as dependent and in need of Allah; and the more man sees himself as dependent and low, the nearer he draws to Allah. The way of attaining this perfection is that once he perceives the greatness of Allah, a feeling of lowliness and inferiority appears in him, for people who are seeking perfection, knowledge and the high levels of servitude, this is the best .way

For us fear is an undesirable state, but it is interesting that we ought to know that the saints [awliya'] of Allah derive pleasure from their fearful state and whenever they lose it once again try to recover it. This state is so desirable and pleasurable to them that they never want to be separated

from it! We do not have the correct perception of that state and cannot explain it well because we have not attained it. But what we have gathered from the stories of the saints [awliya'] of Allah is that those who possessed intense love used to derive pleasure from suffering along the course of love. They derive pleasure from crying as .a result of absence from Him

Despite that the origin of crying is sadness and sorrow, but because it is for the Beloved, it is pleasure-giving to them. It is for this reason that we assert that fear of Allah is desirable and constructive for the saints [awliya'] of Allah and they are not displeased with melting in the presence of Allah and having a state of fear and awe; at least they know that this itself is a prerequisite to attaining eternal gratification .beyond which there is no other pleasure

For this reason the saints [awliya'] of Allah and the leaders of religion used to accord great importance to fear of Allah, because they believed that it was the best factor for annihilating the rebellion of the carnal soul and restraining them from the feelings of needlessness and autonomy and self-sufficiency and egotism. Likewise, this state is .[the best method of attaining the stage of annihilation in Allah [fana' fi Allah

In this regard, what ought to be made clear is that once some people learn terms such as 'the station of annihilation and absorption in Allah' [maqam-i mahw

wa fana' fi Allah], they fantasize that they have become mystics and have attained high positions. It is good for this group to test themselves and see whether the feeling of fear of Allah exists in them or not; has there been a night in their lives when they did not sleep as a result of fear and awe of Allah? Have their eyes ever been swollen ?as a result of their crying as a result of fear of Allah

It is very easy for man to claim that they have attained annihilation in Allah and no longer need these states and stations but we ought to carefully examine as to

whether a little bit of the state that had been attained by John the Baptist ('a) exists in ?us or not. Has any effect appeared in us as a result of these states

A person never becomes a mystic by making claims and learning a few mystical terms. This is a very long path filled with dangers; to quote that great man the deceased Ayatullah Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Amoli, may he reside in Allah's Garden of eternal bliss, traversing this course is harder than uprooting a mountain by means .[of eye lashes [as the tools

If a person wants to trudge the course of divine awareness, he has to make himself ready to endure a lot of hardships, ascetic self-discipline and keeping vigil at night; .[the path has to be trudged in the way that travelers have traversed it [before

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We ought to observe how the saints [awliya'] of Allah like Imam 'Ali ('a) and Imam al-.Sajjad ('a) traveled this path

Fear of Allah and Fleeing from Sin and Obsession with Popularity and Position

According to what has previously been discussed, one of the effects of fear of Allah for people who have attained high spiritual stations is annihilation or absorption in Allah but for ordinary people, the greatest produce of fear of Allah is abstinence from sin and forsaking wrong-doing. When man perpetrates sin, he aspires to bring to hand some benefit or attain some pleasure and gratification, whether that pleasure is real or imaginary, whether that gratification is licentiousness or from the category of .acquiring titles and popularity and position

What can refrain man from such futile urges, which are a cause of sin and deviation, and free him from the trap of the Devil, is fear of Allah; attention to the fact that sin produces ominous effects and deprives him of the eternal and permanent blessings of the hereafter, makes him entangled in everlasting punishment (without the least (.doubt, the more the fear of Allah, the more its effects

It has been narrated in hadith that if there is fear of Allah in the heart of man, there

will remain no room for love and obsession with power and position. That is to say a person who fears Allah is not obsessed with position, does not chase after being beloved by the people and having a good name and popularity. Ambition for position is the greatest calamity for man. It has been

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recorded in some hadiths that the greatest calamity for the believers is love of wealth and position. Obsession with status connotes seeking position and leadership. The thing which can remedy love of position, which is the last immodest quality to exit the hearts of the truthful, is fear of Allah:

Without the least doubt, the mania for fame, love of position and rank leaves the mind of a person who perceives the greatness of Allah and comprehends his own minuteness and smallness vis-à-vis Allah and knows what dangerous repercussions sin has for his world and hereafter. Therefore, the greatest effect of fear of Allah in us is flight from becoming tainted by sin. Of course, love of Allah has become stable in people whose knowledge has become complete and they yearn to reach the beatific presence of Allah.

It is this very love of Allah and yearning to attain the beatific presence of Allah that causes them to overlook [anything] other than the Beloved but this exclusively pertains to the worthy and we have not attained that position of love of Allah. The only thing which is attainable for us is strengthening fear of Allah in our hearts, so that as a result of that we may remain invulnerable to sin and bit by bit attain the aptitude to love Allah in our hearts and arrive at high levels of love and divine knowledge.

The Role of Perceiving the Status of the Fear of the Lovers of Allah and the Angels

Now that talk concerning fear of Allah and its importance and benefits has been brought up, the issue

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arises as to what we ought to do in order to give rise to fear of Allah in us? One of the

best ways to arrive at this level is to look at the degree of the fear of people who are beloved by Allah. Without the least doubt, attending to their [spiritual] states and their boundless fear of Allah is the best way to motivate us to attain fear of Allah. This is the .same method which the Noble Prophet (S) has pursued in this hadith

Among the most beloved slaves of Allah are the angels. The Gracious Qur'an, describing these worthy servants of Allah who are pure from any contamination :states

وَيُسَبِّحُ الرَّعْدُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَالْمَلاَئِكَةُ مِنْ خِيفَتِهِ...

And the thunder declares His glory and praise, and the angels too for awe of" (Him..."(١

With regard to what has been mentioned that knowing the majesty of Allah and paying heed to it give rise to fear and dread of Allah, we find a fine example of this knowledge in the angels of Allah, as the Noble Prophet (S) has expressed in this report that a group of them who are in the divine presence of Allah perceive themselves as small and low and are humbly standing with lowered heads in fear and dread of Allah since the beginning of their creation to the Day of Resurrection. Perhaps, they lack the courage to raise their heads as a result of the intensity of fear of divine need and worry and anxiety and/or

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.Surat al-Ra'd ١٣:١٣ -١

.as a result of attending to the infiniteness and majesty of Allah

When the angels of Allah who are pure from any contamination and sin are scared of divine need in this way, they drop their heads before His majesty and tremble and do not dare raise their heads as a result of feeling guilty of neglecting worship of Allah, is it not worthwhile that us who are stricken by sin and have been ensnared into the fetters of the carnal soul and the deadly trap of the Devil not to raise our heads as a

?result of excess shame and embarrassment

A finer example of the state which the angels have in regard to Allah is when we find ourselves confronted by a great person; we lose ourselves, our tongues do not have the ability to speak and involuntarily drop our heads. Once people who had experienced the greatness of Imam Khomeini's personality and knew him completely were in his presence, it used to seem as though the personality of Imam Khomeini used to melt them like ice as a result of the excess greatness and awe of Imam Khomeini. They used to find themselves facing a majestic mountain of knowledge and power and used to feel they are completely nothing. This is one of the stages of the .servants of Allah

Allah has angels who even the great angels hardly perceive their greatness. It has been narrated in a report that the Angel Gabriel revealed his true image only a few

times to the Noble Prophet (S). The Noble Prophet (S) stated that at the time of his appearance and manifestation, the Noble Prophet used to witness his light .encompassing the East and West

,Imam al-Baqir ('a) states

One day the Noble Prophet (S) was seated and the Angel Gabriel was next to him." Suddenly, Gabriel looked at the sky and the light from him reflected in the sky and its intensity was continually increasing until it attained the color of saffron. Then, Gabriel drew himself close to the Noble Prophet (S) and the Noble Prophet looked at the sky. Then, he saw that the light of Gabriel had encompassed the West and East of the (cosmos in entirety and was getting close to the earth."(۱

Of course, the rank of the Noble Prophet (S) and his luminousness is further than that of the Angel Gabriel, but the Noble Prophet (S) perceived such greatness of Gabriel .(because his reality manifested itself on the human nature of the Noble Prophet (S

Lesson ۲۰: The Prophet's (S) Description of Heaven and Hell

point

There are various ways of attaining the station of fear of Allah, amongst which is contemplation on the spiritual states of the dreadful and fearful of Allah whom knowing can aid man at selecting them as the best role models in the course of attaining the state of fear and dread of the presence of Allah. For this reason, in this section of the hadith, the station of fear of the best of Allah's slaves, the angels, has been introduced and

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱۶, p. ۲۹۲ -۱

.in the previous lesson we discussed about it

Meditation about the Greatness of Creatures

The other way of attaining the station of fear is meditation about the greatness of creatures. Without doubt, comprehending the greatness, stability and firmness of creatures leads man to understand better the majesty and infinite wisdom of Allah and his own incapacity, inability and indigence [in the face of Allah] and in this case undertake more diligent endeavor in the direction of attaining perfection and completion and forsake obeying the appetitive soul. In addition to this, by knowing the majesty of Allah and his boundless authority and power, he becomes acutely afraid .and apprehensive of disobeying Allah

By examining in religious texts and hadiths and verses of the Gracious Qur'an the directives about knowledge of the greatness of creatures and awareness of the majesty of the Creator, we find that Allah and the saints [awliya'] of religion have taken a lot of effort to explain the greatness of the creatures of Allah. They have set forth with their clear explications the delicateness, stability, firmness and variety of creatures and in this way used to incite people to look around themselves and meditate about the creatures of Allah, ranging from very small creatures to the big .and great creatures

In his brilliant explanation, Imam 'Ali ('a) makes meditation and contemplation about the infinite power of Allah and the variety of His blessings known as a means of being :led to the correct path and to fear of Allah

Had they pondered over the greatness of His"

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power and the vastness of His bounty, they would have returned to the right path and feared the punishment of the Fire; but hearts are sick and eyes are impure. Do they not see the small things He has created, how He strengthened their system and opened for them hearing and sight and made for them bones and skins? Look at the ant with its small body and delicate form. It can hardly be seen in the corner of the eye, nor by the perception of the imagination; how it moves on the earth and leaps at its livelihood. It carries the grain to its hole and deposits it in its place of stay. It collects during the summer for its winter, and during strength for the period of its weakness. Its livelihood is guaranteed, and it is fed according to fitness. Allah, the Kind, does not forget it and Allah, the Giver, does not deprive it, even though it may be in dry stone (and fixed rocks."(۱

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) narrates a thorough hadith that Zaynab the perfume seller came to the Noble Prophet's (S) house and asked about the majesty of Allah, the Exalted. In response to her question, the Noble Prophet (S) embarked upon comparing the cosmoses and seven skies and the galaxies and also the minuteness and smallness of :every one of them with the other; one of his statements was

This earth and that which is inside it and that which is above it is in the"

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۷۳۶, sermon [khutbah] ۲۲۷ -۱

(face of the second sky like a finger-ring that has fallen [or been lost] in the desert."(۱

This relationship also exists regarding every cosmos when compared with the cosmos

above it until we arrive at the seventh sky, which too is nothing when compared to the .Divine Throne

In order to give rise to wonderful fruits from meditation about the expansiveness and greatness of the cosmos and to perceive the minuteness and smallness of man, the scholars of ethics and divine instructors have recommended that when you want to recite your prayers and attend to the divine Essence, go to an expansive desert with boundless vastness because it is in that case that you will better perceive your .minuteness in the presence of His majestic creation

It is natural that as a result of man being confined to a closed and confined environment, his imagination of the cosmos is limited to that same tight environment but once he goes to the expansive desert and witnesses the mountains and seas, he will have another conception of the world. It has to be borne in mind that this is just in regard to the expansiveness and greatness of the world, regardless of the !comparison of the earth with the sky and the first sky with the rest of the skies

Nowadays, information which has been attained from the galaxies and stars by means of telescopes and spaceships gives invaluable help to man in understanding the created world. It is natural that if before worship

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۶۰, pp. ۸۳-۸۵, Iranian print -۱

man thought a little about the greatness of creation, he would perceive his smallness better and in this case get closer to Allah, because the way of getting close to Allah is .feeling small and minute in His presence

The Indescribable Greatness of the Resurrection

There is not the least doubt that the last world, among others heaven and hell, are among the greatest creations of Allah whose conception and perception are not feasible for us. On the basis of what is gathered from the verses of the Qur’an and the hadiths, in the same way that we are incapable of perceiving the greatness of Allah,

we are incapable of perceiving the greatness of the Day of Resurrection and its awe and terror too and we cannot have any conception of it. But paying heed to and taking a look at the explanation of the Qur’an and hadiths in regard to the Day of Resurrection prepares us better to perceive our smallness and circumstances in the face of the greatness of the Resurrection and heaven and hell, which are signs of the .greatness of the Creator

:In regard to dread and terror that prevails over the Resurrection, the Qur’an states

يَوْمَ تَرَوْنَهَا تَذْهَلُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمْلٍ حَمْلَهَا وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَارى وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَارى وَلَكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللهِ شَدِيدٌ

On the day when you shall see it, every woman giving suck shall quit in confusion“ what she suckled, and every pregnant woman shall lay down her burden, and you shall see men intoxicated, and

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(they shall not be intoxicated but the chastisement of Allah will be severe.”(۱

The Resurrection plain is so terrifying and horrifying that man becomes unconscious, such that he has no power to control himself. A mother, for whom her most beloved one is her child, even worse a suckling baby who has an intense material and .emotional need of her, forgets the baby as a result of fear and dread

Once man carefully attends to the concept and purport of the ayats of the Qur’an, he will comprehend how daunting they are and impel man to review his opinion in regard to their perceptions and vain activities, a transformation will occur in man and will .forsake that which is an encumbrance on the path to guidance and prosperity

But it is regrettable that we seldom pay attention to the purport of these ayats and content ourselves only with recitation and outward form of ayats and refrain from contemplating about the meanings and perceiving their greatness. With regard to what has been mentioned, we are incapable of perceiving the essence and greatness of the hereafter and heaven and hell and our conception of the Resurrection, heaven

.and hell is similar to the imagination and feeling which arise in the world

If it is narrated to us about the fire of the hell and its burning, our imagination of its burning is like the burning we feel when we put our hands on fire and nothing more. Or, when mention is made about

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.Surat al-Hajj ۲۲:۲ -۱

the blessings and pleasures of heaven, our conception does not go further than what .we have known and felt in the world

The utmost limit of man's brain goes so far as to conceive things which it has seen or their prototypes which it has witnessed, even then after comparison, and it has no conception and imagination of things which it has not seen. It is as a result of these very limitations in the perception and comprehension and activities of the brain of man that there is no option for explaining the attributes and qualities of the last world save that they are explicated in forms which are similar to what man perceives in the .world, otherwise he will never at all comprehend those qualities

For this reason, it is possible for those qualities to have occurred a million times for them to reflect and reproduce themselves in the realms of our worldly comprehension and understanding and be effective, otherwise if it is beyond the realm of our perception, it will not be effective in us because it is not perceptible and .comprehensible

In regard to what has been mentioned, effort has been made in the Qur'an and hadiths to explain the majesty of heaven and hell and the blessings and punishments in the form of examples which people are acquainted with. In this hadith too the Noble Prophet (S) has selected this same method in order to explain the greatness of .heaven and hell

Describing a Section of the Tortures of Hell

The Noble Prophet (S) explains a

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section of the punishments of hell to Abu Dharr stating that if an insignificant amount of it appears in the world, it will have very destructive and disastrous effects. He also mentions an example from heavenly blessings which are unbearable for earthly man. This elucidation is intended at guiding us lovers of the world and its treasures so that as a result of comparing the world with the hereafter, we may perceive the .minuteness and smallness of the world

Even if the last world with all its indescribable largeness and expansiveness is itself a specimen of the ayats (signs) of Allah and all have acquired existence with one existential resolution [of Allah] but are themselves evidence of the majesty and power .of the divine Essence

:The Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! If on that day man had works equal to the works of seventy prophets,“ ”.he would count his works as few as a result of that which he sees

We do not even have works equivalent to the works of one believer, what with having the acts of adoration and works of the Noble Prophet (S) and what with performing good works equivalent to the worship of seventy prophets (S). Even if, assuming impossibility, we had such aptitude and capacity as to perform works equivalent to the works of seventy prophets (S), we would still not consider it equivalent to a minute particle on the Resurrection once we see the greatness and expansiveness of that .Day

The Last Day

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is so frightening and terrifying that without the grace and favor of Allah even the works of seventy prophets (‘a) will not be of any avail to us. For this reason, we always

have to have hope in the grace and mercy of Allah and safeguard the outpour of His clemency by means of supplication and imploration and inward attention to His expansive mercy. We ought not to rely on our works, because they do not avail us .anything

:In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) states

And if a pail of the pus and filth of hell were poured on the eastern part of the earth,“ ”.the brains of the people living on the western part of the earth would boil

In the Gracious Qur’an kinds of food for the dwellers of hell are mentioned, amongst :[which is refuse [ghislin

فَلَيْسَ لَهُ الْيَوْمَ هَهُنَا حَمِيمٌ * وَلَا طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِنْ غِسْلِينٍ

(Therefore, he has not today a true friend, nor any food except refuse.”(۱“

refuse [ghislin], which is the drink of the people of hell, denotes filthy water which remains after washing clothes and utensils. That water is very fetid and dirty as a result of sucking all the dirt and smell out of the washed items. In reality, refuse is dirt and contamination which is a result of the filthy and ugly works of man and is so smelly, fetid and chocking that if a pail of it were poured in the eastern part of the cosmos, the brains of those dwelling

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۱- ۶۹:۳۵-۳۶ Surat al-Haqqah.

.on the western part of the world would boil

Our conception of the boiling of man’s brain is limited to a very inflamed and burning fire brought close to the head of a human being until their brain boils and becomes exterminated but no matter how hot and burning that fire might be, it is not effective when placed at a distance of ten or more meters. But in the Resurrection, the dwellers of the eternal infernal hell become so thirsty that they become compelled to drink

boiling and hot water one pail of which if poured on the eastern part of the earth .would boil and wipe out the brains of those dwelling on the western part of it

The fire of hell and the punishment of the grave and the Resurrection are not comparable to the fire of earth and its punishment. The fire of the world is cold and docile and only burns the surface and is easier to endure than the fire of the eternal inferno but the fire of hell is pure and even conscious. It is for this reason that no fire in the world burns the soul but the fire of hell burns and melts the heart and soul too in addition to the body. There is no doubt that the fire of hell and its punishment are a .reflection and consequence of man's works in the world

The Reaction of People and Angels in Face of the Clamor and Roar of Hell

In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) explains the intensity of the roaring and clamor of hell

:stating

And when the hell roars, no angel and messenger remains standing save that they" fall on their knees and say, 'O Lord! Give us redemption!' Even Abraham forgets his ".'son Isaac and says, 'I am Your friend Abraham. Forget me not

:Allah in the Qur'an states

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ شَقُوا فَفِى النَّارِ لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَشَهِيقٌ

So as to those who are unhappy, they shall be in the fire; for them shall be sighing" (and groaning in it."(۱

:Interpreting this ayat, 'Allamah Tabataba'i states

In the commentary of the Qur'an by Zamakhshari entitled, "Kishaf", 'zafir' denotes" air and breathing out and 'shahiq' implies breathing in the air. Allah's purport is that the dwellers of hell take air in their chests and then release it and because of the

hotness of the fire and the greatness and magnitude of the punishment, raise their voices in lamentation and wailing and mourning."(۲)

According to the aforementioned commentary, in the same way that man breathes in and out, hell too breathes in and out. By breathing out, the hell takes out the flames and burning heat which embraces all the dwellers of the inferno and by breathing in pulls the dwellers of hell back inside. The Noble Prophet (S) states, "Once hell roars, all the people, even the great prophets of Allah ('a) and the angels residing in His proximity become fearful and scared and fall on the ground, forget all the people and things and only think about themselves.

They neither have the ability to move nor the tranquility

۱- Surat Hud ۱۱:۱۰۶.

۲- Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۱۱, p. ۲۱.

to remain calm, that is why they fall on their knees in humility and lowliness and raise their hands asking for the infinite mercy of Allah and ask Him to grant them redemption; such that Abraham ('a) forgets his most beloved son Isaac and says, "O Lord! I am Your friend Abraham. Forget me not and grant me redemption from this great and deadly event." This is an example of the requital of Allah on the Day of Resurrection which would drive all creatures into fright if it were to appear in the world.

In order to gather more awareness of hell and its tortures, it is worthwhile to quote a thorough hadith from Imam al-Sadiq ('a):

"One day when the Prophet (S) was seated, the Angel Gabriel came close to him in a sad and sorrowful state as a result of which his color had transformed. The Prophet (S) stated, 'Why are you sad and sorrowful?' Gabriel replied, 'O Muhammad! Why ought I not to be thus when the breaths of hell have been released today?' The Prophet (S) stated, 'What are the breaths of hell?'

He replied, 'Verily Allah, the Exalted, created the fire, then let it burn for a thousand years until it became red. Then, He ordered it to go down for a thousand years until it became white. Then after that too He ordered it to burn for a thousand years until the fire became black and that is the black and dark fire. Therefore, if

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one hook of the chain of the burning fire whose height is many inches high were let loose on the world, the world would melt as a result of its fire.'"

After that the Noble Prophet (S) cried and the Angel Gabriel also cried. Allah sent an angel to the two of them and that angel said, "Allah sends His peace upon you and states that He protected you from committing sins for which you would be punished."

Heaven Is the Eternal Abode of the Believers and Righteous

Without the least doubt, heaven and its blessings are among the greatest creations of Allah and is allotted to people who traverse the path of servitude and obedience to Allah and by means of faith and good works have attained the highest human levels and in the end have got the capacity of ascending the spiritual realms [or celestial world]:

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَملُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهارُ... وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُون

"And convey good news to those who believe and do good deeds, that they shall have gardens in which rivers flow...and they shall have pure mates in them, and in them, they shall abide."(1)

In another verse, Allah states:

وَعَدَ اللهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَمَسَاكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِى جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِن اللهِ أَكْبَرُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

"Allah has promised to the believing men and believing women gardens, beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them, and goodly dwellings in gardens of perpetual abode; and best of all is Allah's

.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۵ -۱

(goodly pleasure—that is the grand achievement."(۱

The truth is that man prepares his heaven and its blessings by means of his righteous deeds and good works. For this reason, the more he endeavors at servitude and obedience of the Lord, and overcomes the hurdles by means of ascetic self-discipline and fighting with the carnal soul, the more he attains abundant and higher blessings; this is a reality we clearly infer from the hadiths and verses of the Gracious Qur'an. It :has been narrated from Imam al-Sadiq ('a) that the Prophet (S) stated

When I was taken around the sky, we entered heaven and there I saw the angels" busy building a palace and were placing bricks of gold and silver one over the other and sometimes used to put their work to a stop. I asked them, 'Why are you working intermittently?' They replied, 'We are waiting for materials and stuffs to be provided to us.' I asked, 'What are your materials?' They said, 'The invocations 'subhanallah [glory be to Allah]', and 'al-hamdu lillah [praise be to Allah]', and 'la ilaha illa Allah [there is no god but Allah]' and 'Allah-u Akbar [Allah is Great]' which is pronounced from the lips of the believer; once he gets pre-occupied with these invocations we too get busy with building and whenever he stops reciting these invocations, we stop our (work as well'."(۲

:The Noble Prophet (S) introduces and elucidates about heaven thus

O Abu Dharr! If one of the women of paradise were to appear"

.Surat al-Tawbah (or Bara'ah) ۹:۷۲ -۱

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۸, p. ۱۲۳ -۲

on a dark and unlit night, she would enlighten the world more than does the moon of the fourteenth night [of the lunar month] and the perfume which will arise from

scattering her hair will reach the noses of every creature of the earth and if one of the clothes of the dwellers of the Garden of eternal bliss were spread in the world today, every person who would see that would become unconscious and the eyes of men ".would not have the ability to see its radiance

It can be gathered from the words of the Noble Prophet (S) that man's organs and eyes are in the Resurrection stronger than organs and eyes in the world: people in the world are so weak and their perception and comprehension and endurance is so minute that if one of the clothes of paradise were to appear in the world, no eye would have the capacity to see and perceive it and every person who sees it would lose his senses and become unconscious; in spite of the fact that wearing and looking .at that dress is a normal thing

The truth is that in heaven aptitudes, amongst them the ability to see and perceive, are very high. The consciousness and perception of existents having the aptitude to perceive and comprehend, such as man, will be increased to more than a million times in the hereafter. In the last world, all things have life and in reality true life exists there and under its

p: ۲۹۳

auspices everything has an intellect and a conscience and the ability to speak; it is for :this reason that even the trees and stones speak

وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَوةُ الدُّنْيا إِلَّا لَهْوٌ وَلَعِبٌ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الآخِرَةَ لَهِىَ الْحَيَوَانُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

And the life of this world is nothing but a sport and a play; and as for the next Abode;" (that most surely is the life—did they but know."(۱)

It is natural that when everything has life, and even the herbs and stones speak as well, without the least doubt people will also have life and existence and all the organs of their bodies will be able to speak. It is for this reason that when in hell the ears, eyes and skin of the bodies of the dwellers of hell will give evidence about their crimes and sins, they will say, "How did you provide evidence about our works." Those organs

:will reply thus

... أَنْطَقَنَا اللهُ الَّذِی أَنْطَقَ کُلَّ شَیْءٍ...

(Allah who makes everything speak has made us speak…"(۲..."

That which has been mentioned in this section in regard to the tortures of hell and the blessings of heaven cannot be measured by standards of this world. What is the nature of substances such as the refuse of hell which are so fetid and dangerous and choking that if a pail of it were poured on the eastern part of the cosmos would boil ?!the brains of those living on the western part of it

Of course, in order for

p: ۲۹۴

.Surat al-'Ankabut ۲۹:۶۴ -۱

.Surat Ha Mim (or Fussilat) ۴۱:۲۱ -۲

us not to imagine that such a thing is not feasible and is far from conception, Allah has placed and compressed energies in some substances such as atomic energy in uranium which if a small amount of their energy were released, it is so explosive and .destructive that it would wipe out and turn upside down the whole city

This is just the energy of elements and materials existent in this world. Now that world whose power and energy is probably a million times more than the power and .energy of this world leaves behind very great effects which are not perceptible to us

That which has been mentioned is intended to make us comprehend our place of abode and circumstances; we ought to know that we have not been created for this limited world, in which we enjoy limited perception and conception. Our perception .and conscience are limited in a world whose pleasures are limited too

We ought to know that whatever is in the world is a pre-requisite for the hereafter and has a partial phenomenon of that thing which exists in the hereafter.

Gratifications which we perceive in the world are not comparable to the pleasures of the Last Abode. Calamities and afflictions with which we are confronted are nothing .compared to the tortures of the next world

Without the least doubt, comparing the tortures of this world with those of the Last Abode and also comparing the blessings and pleasures of the world with the gratifications of the

p: ۲۹۵

Eternal Abode and explaining the differences and great disparities between them results in man, to the extent of his capacity and the ability of his brain, to perceive his minuteness and smallness and the world in which he lives in contrast to the Last World and also comprehend the minuteness of the created order vis-à-vis the .Creator

The other fruit of this comparison and analogy is forsaking pride and egotism and humility and submissiveness vis-à-vis right. If he derives benefit from the world, he ought not to take pride in himself and if he is deprived of a blessing, he should not wish for it because all the blessings of the world are not worth the value of one apple .of paradise

For this reason, this world is not a place of falling in love. We ought, by the grace of the directives of the prophets ('a) and the saints [awliya'] of Allah, to perceive the greatness of the Resurrection and its Creator and by knowing our circumstances .endeavor not to be entangled in pride, egotism, self-admiration and bigheadedness

Lesson ۲۱: The Importance of Meditation and the Need for Preserving Factors which Ward off Negligence

point

Previous to this, discourse was had in regard to fear and dread and factors which make them appear in men. It has been said that amongst the factors which cause fear of Allah to appear in man is paying heed to the greatness of the Resurrection, the

intensity of the tortures of hell and the value and expansiveness of the eternal .Garden of bliss

The relation of this section of

p: ۲۹۶

the words of the Prophet (S) with the previous issues is for the reason that qualities of the soul and the inner conscience like fear, dread, yearning, hope, love and affection all come into appearance once man is heedful and his heart is awake and aware; but if he were heedless, and his attention were weak, the states either never at all come .into appearance and/or appear in a weak and faint form

Once man becomes afflicted by negligence and hardheartedness and he himself gets aware of this ethical vice, there are causes and factors which help man to emerge from that low condition. Some of the causes and factors are from the inner .conscience of man and some of those factors are external

Sometimes, in the external world an event occurs, words are heard and/or conditions are provided which result in man's admonition, wakefulness and emerging from heedlessness. Of course, this effect is in the category of divine graces and man ought to make the most of these opportunities and to be thankful, so that the graces and favors of Allah, the Exalted, may multiply. If these opportunities are not appreciated and not made use of, the negligence and hardheartedness of man increases. In this :regard, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Soften your voice [when you are] near corpses or at war with the" ".enemies of religion and at the time of reciting the Qur'an

In this section, the Noble Prophet (S) hints at three ethical, instructional and security

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:advices

(The Three Recommendations of the Prophet (S

A) Speaking Softly At The Time Of Escorting A Funeral

It is very proper for man to speak softly and not loudly; this is a praiseworthy habit which Luqman, the Wise, recommended to his son:

... وَاغْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ

"... And pursue the right course in your going about and lower your voice; surely the most hateful of voices is braying of the asses."(۱)

Even if in ordinary instances speaking softly is desirable, but still in some cases we ought to speak softer than the common and ordinary instances and/or adopt quietness; for instance when man wants to concentrate his thoughts and attention on an event which has taken place and stop themselves from other deeds. It is natural that one of the instances which ought to drive man into thought and reflection and from which he ought to take lesson is at the time of escorting and burying a corpse. Man has to attend to this fact that this death will one day come to him.

For this reason, he ought to abstain from talking about worldly affairs and his attention should be concentrated on his final destination; he ought to ponder deeper into this fact that his corpse will be carried on the shoulders of people someday and take lesson from it. It is a pity that we do not pay heed to this issue and even at the time of escorting and burying corpses too we do not follow the proper rules of conduct and do not seek to take lesson. We do this

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۱- Surat Luqman ۳۱:۱۹.

in spite of the fact that it has been recommended that at the time of escorting a corpse we ought to move in silence, tranquility, soberness and calm and our attention ought to only be directed at the corpse, that is why the Noble Prophet states:

"O Abu Dharr! When you are escorting a dead body, busy your intellect with meditation and humility, know that you too will go back to Him."

One of the issues which are likely to drive negligence out of man is witnessing the corpse of a believer which has left the world after a lifetime of endeavor and deriving benefit from the favors of the world and pleasure-seeking and his dead body is being taken to the grave. Without the least doubt, witnessing that sad scene drives man out of heedlessness because paying heed to the world and its treasures and encumbrances gives rise to negligence and the thing which concentrates man's .attention to the hereafter causes wakefulness and abstinence from negligence

For this reason, the best cause of wakefulness and keeping heedlessness at bay is for man to look at objective entities; after a lifetime of struggle an individual's life comes to an end, and he gets led to the last world. Even if man knows that death is certain and everyone dies, still witnessing a person who has passed away has more effects .than merely knowing

Opportunities like being present at the burial of believers ought to be made the most of in the

p: ۲۹۹

direction of edification of the soul and getting rid of the carnal desires of the soul and abstaining from distracting our attention while only concentrating on one's end. Man ought to conceive that this is a way we all are destined to trudge, sooner or later. Therefore, is the transitory life of this world worth striving for without any anxiety? .We ought to think whether we have endeavored for the hereafter or not

Meditation and reflection about death, as has been emphasized in the hadiths and Qur'an, is one of the most effective factors which cause abstaining from the Devil and setting foot on the right path. Man ought to think that perhaps he may not remain alive an hour more because no man is certain about up to when he is going to remain .alive

Therefore, in contrast to long and protracted hopes which cause hardheartedness and heedlessness, paying attention to death results in abstaining from negligence and in man's awakening and all too often meditation and thought transform man's way of

.life and his destiny too

It is natural that once man reflects about his destiny and perceives himself subdued in the face of the majesty of Allah, a state of brokenness, lowliness and humility appears in his heart whose effects also get manifested outwardly in the same way that once a believer stands to recite his prayers perceives himself in the presence of the greatness of Allah giving rise to humility and lowliness in him and of course

p: ٣٠٠

this is something which has been emphasized and has been mentioned as the most :delicate quality which causes a believer to attain his prosperity

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ * الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِى صَلاَتِهِمْ خَاشِعُون

)Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers…"(١"

In contrast, people who do not perceive the majesty of Allah and do not reflect upon) (.the contents of prayer do not have humility and submissiveness

As we have already said humility takes place in the heart and its effects become manifested in the organs and members of the body such as eyes, but at times humility :is attributed to certain parts of the body, as the Gracious Qur'an states

... وَخَشَعَتِ الأَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ فَلاَ تَسْمَعُ إِلاَّ هَمْسًا

and the voices shall be low before the Beneficent God so that you shall hear ought…")but a soft sound."(٢

:Elsewhere, He states

خَاشِعَةً أَبْصَارُهُمْ تَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ وَقَدْ كَانُوا يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ وَهُمْ سَالِمُونَ

Their looks cast down, abasement shall overtake them; and they were called upon to")make obeisance; but they shall not be able."(٣

According to what has been mentioned, being present at funerals and paying heed to

the destiny of one who has passed away and also attention to the scene of the Resurrection and describing its conditions, to the extent that man is aware, causes humility, submissiveness and abstinence from negligence. But if man is at that moment indifferent, as if nothing has taken place, and only thinks about the world and talking to this person and that other

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۱- ۲۳:۱-۲ Surat al-Mu'minun.

۲- ۲۰:۱۰۸ Surat Ta Ha.

۳- ۶۸:۴۳ Surat al-Qalam.

person, transformation does not occur in him.

Once someone dies, some people get busy with thinking about the benefit and gain which they derive from his death; if he was a teacher, they pre-occupy themselves with taking his position, if he was a boss, they become happy at the prospect of occupying his position. Once a doctor passes away, others are happy that they will take his place.

This is very regrettable and shameful. An event which is supposed to increase man's attention to the hereafter and the destiny of life becomes a cause for man to get more submerged in the world. It is regrettable that in circumstances where lesson has to be taken and events which ought to be factors for man to become awake and to distance himself from illusions and fantasies, some people are afflicted by negligence and hardness of heart, become more entangled in delusions and fallacies and that frightening and awakening scene not only does not awaken them, but also increases the hardness of their hearts. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) advises Abu Dharr that one of the instances which causes fear, humility, lowliness and submissiveness in man is presence at funerals and burying rites; on the condition that one is attentive and heedful and abstains from being noisome and paying attention to this and that person. He only ought to think about himself and speak softly so as to follow up on his meditation and reflection; for the

reason that speaking loudly and even merely speaking occupy the heart of man and prevent him from presence of heart:

One day a man in Tehran asked the late 'Allamah Tabataba'i, may he reside in Allah's eternal Garden of bliss, "What ought I to do in order to have presence of heart during prayer?" In response, 'Allamah Tabataba'i said, "Speak less [during the course of your day]." We may perhaps be surprised about the role speaking has in preventing man from having presence of heart during prayer (coincidentally, that man was very talkative).

Without the least doubt, speaking and talking expend the energy [which is supposed to be preserved] for the mind, the soul and spirit of man, especially if talking is a custom, like admonishing, delivering speeches and teaching. When a group of people are listening to the words of a speaker, he takes care not to make a single mistake; it is for this reason that he concentrates all his attention on his talking and refrains from attending to himself. For this reason, speaking less and also speaking softly results in man becoming more attentive to his inner self and keeping mental distraction at bay.

In regard to the Noble Prophet's (S) state at the time of escorting or burying a corpse, a hadith has been recorded stating:

"At the time of escorting and burying a corpse, intense sorrow used to overcome him and he used to attend more to himself and speak less."(۱)

B) Speaking Softly At The Time Of War

Considering the circumstances of the forces and

۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۸, p. ۲۶۴, Beirut print.

the privacy of military secrets during military operations and war, the Noble Prophet

(S) recommends speaking softly during war. During war special conditions arise—especially during planning for military operations and gathering information about the war zone—which call for utmost precaution and care at keeping war secrets and not divulging the conditions of your forces to the enemies.

All too often, speaking and improper movements result in the enemy becoming aware of the strategy of your operations and in the end the lives of people and soldiers fall in danger and the design and strategy to become thwarted and frustrated.

This truth was very much felt by our soldiers during the entire eight years of war; at times circumstances were so sensitive and dangerous and their conduct was so fateful that they had to use ways where their footsteps had not to be heard; in truth, they used to make use of the principle of attacking while the enemy is unaware.

Another point which can be derived from this advice of the Noble Prophet (S) is that the sensitivity and importance of war and military operations demand that the forces use all their capacity and energy in the direction of advancing military goals. In view of this, with silence and tranquility and concentration of the senses, they ought to concentrate all their capacity and energy concealed in their inner selves and with perfect firmness, decisiveness and steadfastness combat their enemies and abstain from that which dissuades them from war and military

operations. Bearing this important matter in mind, in his military recommendations to his son Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah during the war of Jamal, Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"Mountains may move from their position but you should not move from yours. Grit your teeth. Lend to Allah your head (in fighting for Allah, give yourself to Allah). Establish your feet firmly on the ground. Have your eye on the remotest foe and close your eyes (to their numerical majority). And keep sure that succor is but from Allah, the Glorified."(۱)

C) Speaking Softly At The Time Of Reciting The Qur'an

If man finds the grace to be present in sessions of recitation of the Gracious Qur’an, whether his aim and motivation is to derive benefit from the Noble Qur’an or reasons other than that, like participating in sessions of wishing Allah’s mercy for the dead and to expresses condolences to the remaining people, it is necessary to make the most of this invaluable chance, embark upon meditation about the ayats (signs) of Allah and .paying heed to their meanings and purports

Even when the celestial sound of the Gracious Qur’an is being aired on radio, we ought to delve into deep thought and meditation so as to derive benefit from the meanings of this eternal, inspiring and guiding miracle in the direction of edifying and purifying the inner soul and getting rid of inward ethical vices and establishing :invaluable attributes like humility and lowliness, as the Qur’an states

اللهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَانِى تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ٦٢, short saying ١١, trans. Fayd al-Islam -١

وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلى ذِكْرِ اللهِ...

Allah has revealed the best announcement, a book conformable in its various parts,“ repeating whereat do shudder the skins of those who fear their Lord, then their skins (and their hearts become pliant to the remembrance of Allah...”(١

With regard to the wonderful effects of the Qur’an, if man does not pay attention to the purports of the verses at the time of recitation of the Gracious Qur’an and for him there is no difference between the sound of the Qur’an and the words of others, he .gets afflicted by negligence and his hardheartedness increases

Considering the importance and gravity of the need to protect the honor of the :Gracious Qur’an and to grant it value, Allah states

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

And when the Qur’an is recited, then listen to it and remain silent, that mercy may be“ (shown to you.”(٢)

It is natural that in regard of the fact that Allah has placed the Qur’an as a means for man’s guidance and his inner transformation and conversion and concentrating his attention on Allah, now if he does not pay attention to the sound of the Qur’an and not differentiate between that heavenly sound from the rest of the sounds and not embark upon deriving benefit from the divine admonitions and advices, he has done an ugly deed and has behaved with ingratitude. For this reason, in addition to this fact that he has lost an invaluable opportunity, his hardheartedness has also been

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١- Surat al-Zumar ٣٩:٢٣.

٢- Surat al-A‘raf ٧:٢٠۴.

increased and loses that relative and limited readiness which he had for guidance.

In order to derive benefit from the Gracious Qur’an, it is necessary to concentrate our attention and listen to it as if the heavenly sounds of the Gracious Qur’an are being pronounced by the two lips of the Noble Prophet (S). In this case, the Qur’an produces fruit in us and we derive benefit from it in a praiseworthy way.

In sessions of reciting the Gracious Qur’an, like the mourning sessions during which the Qur’an is recited, listening to it and paying heed to it is a praiseworthy habit and a lot of recommendation has been made in regard to it. Unfortunately, we do not observe this good habit. We engage in conversation with one another during recitation of the Gracious Qur’an at mourning ceremonies and often times we talk loudly and without the least doubt a person whose thoughts and mind have been drawn to conversation and listening to the words of those around him lags behind at paying attention to the gracious Quran.

In this regard, the Sunnis have excelled more than us; they have set up special sessions for recitation of the Qur’an and pay praiseworthy attention to the sound and

recitation of the Gracious Qur’an, but on the other hand some of them participate in those sessions in order to watch the skills which are being displayed by the reciters of the Qur’an and to encourage and cheer them by repeatedly saying ‘Allah Allah’. Far

p: ٣٠٧

from comparison, these sessions are like concerts where a singer sings and the rest .of the people clap hands for him

In reality, such people are paying attention to the words and sounds of the Gracious Qur’an and not to its purports and wonderful effects and taking lesson from it. Unfortunately, we seldom hold sessions of recitation and listening to the Gracious Qur’an. The general sessions of our recitation of the Qur’an are just those same sessions of recitation for the dead at mourning ceremonies. In these sessions the reciter recites the Qur’an, but the other people are busy with their own work and/or !talk to one another

Sometimes, they raise the voice of the loud speaker so high that it bothers the ears of every listener and for this reason divest them of the interest to listen to the Qur’an. This is in spite of the fact that all the aspects have to be observed and the sound of the loud speakers have to be adjusted to the extent that those present in the session derive benefit and it ought not to be the cause of their getting bothered and leaving .the recitation session

It has to be added that both these two methods and customs are incorrect and insufficient; both the method which we have adopted of not paying attention to and rarely holding recitation sessions is not right and both the method which the Sunnis have opted for merely holding recitation sessions for the sake of displaying

p: ٣٠٨

their artistic capacities and not paying heed to the meanings and purports of the .verses of the Qur’an is insufficient

It is proper to hold general and expansive sessions for recitation of the Qur’an where

the sound and recital is beautiful and also makes available the opportunity and occasion to explain the meanings and purports of the Qur'an and to take lesson from it. Verses of the Gracious Qur'an ought to be recited with a beautiful and sorrowful sound which gives rise to humility and submissiveness in the listeners and also causes :admonition and wakefulness and self-awareness in them

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلى الرَّسُولِ تَرَى أَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ...

And when they hear what has been revealed to the Apostle, you will see their eyes" (overflowing with tears..."(١

The Consequences of Inattention to the Causes of Spiritual Wakefulness

O Abu Dharr! Know that salt is the preserver [or medicine] of everything corruptible," ".but once salt itself becomes corrupt, there is no treatment [or preserver] for it

Perhaps, the connection between this sentence and the previous issues is that all our problems arise from negligence, hedonism and obsession with material things and they give rise to the corruption of the heart and soul. Now, there are means and ways of treating these pains and encumbrances which give rise to vigilance and man's paying heed to his destiny. One of those causes is presence in mourning ceremonies .and burying rites and paying attention to death

When man sees the corpse of a person who is heading to the last world being carried

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١- Surat al-Ma'idah ٥:٨٣.

on people's shoulders, he visualizes his own death and delves deep into thought. This transformation of the inside results in shame and humility, a state of humility and lowliness vis-à-vis right is brought to life in him. At that time, he becomes afraid of the .destiny which lies in expectation of him

In regard to taking lesson from the death of other people, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states to

:one of his companions by the name of Aba Salih

When you are carrying a corpse on your shoulders, imagine that you are being" carried on other people's hands and you are requesting your Lord to return you to the world once again and He too grants your request and you are returned to the world. Then, take care and observe how you begin your second life once more." Thereafter, he stated, "It is surprising that some people who are deprived of seeing either the previous and later generations and amongst whom the call of departure and emigration is continually made are likewise pre-occupied by amusement and play."(۱)

In consideration to what has been mentioned, once a factor like salt, which prevents the corruption of the heart and is medicine for spiritual pains, becomes corrupt, what ?thing would remedy it

Being present at mourning and burying rites ought to plunge man deep into thought and remind him about his own death, if it becomes a cause of more reflection about the world and his future and/or at the time of movement not only

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۲۵۸ -۱

does he not take lesson, but with utmost lack of shame engages in gossiping and back-biting other people; he becomes corrupt like corrupt salt and after that man becomes afflicted by hardheartedness and coldness and awakening scenes do not bring about any transformation in him and no medicine can cure his inner pains. There is no doubt that recitation of the Gracious Qur'an is a remedy of man's inner spiritual :pains, as states the Gracious Qur'an

يا اَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جاءَتْكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَشَفَاءٌ لِمَا فِى الصُّدُورِ وَهُدىً وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

O men! There has come to you an admonition and a healing for what is in the breasts" and guidance and a mercy for the believers."(۱)

Now once the Gracious Qur'an, which is a cure and paying attention to its meanings

places invaluable truths at the disposal of man, becomes a means for the world and acquisition of fame, not only is it not a cure but itself adds to our spiritual pains and becomes a cause of more obsession with the world and becoming distanced from .Allah and the truth of the Gracious Qur'an

Reproaching Laziness and Vain Laughing

:Reproaching futile laughter and laziness, the Noble Prophet states

Know that there are two unacceptable traits among you: one is laughter out of" surprise and wonder (laughter that has no cause) and the other is (deliberate) laziness ".and idleness which is not a result of forgetfulness and ignorance

The Noble Prophet (S) admonishes the believers that there are two unacceptable qualities in them which cause more negligence and

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.Surat Yunus ١٠:٥٧ -١

the weakening of the state of fear and dread. It is proper for the believers to undertake curing and remedying these two indecent attributes, one of which is inopportune laughter. At times, man is encountered by surprising and laughable scenes in which case he naturally becomes overcome by laughter, despite that people whose attention is fixed on Allah only smile when they witness a laughable scene and .do not raise their voices to a boisterous laugh

When a funny tale was narrated to some great men, or when they were encountered by a laughable incident, they only used to smile but their attention was elsewhere and .witnessing that incident did not leave the least effect in them

Even if the dignity of a believer and his attention to the ultra-cosmos and to the presence of Allah do not grant him the opportunity to laugh, if a comical moment occurs, there is no fault with laughing but we ought to keep aloof from loud and inappropriate laughter because intense heedlessness has overcome the heart of a

.person who laughs inopportunely and loudly on a small pretext

:Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) states in a hadith

Inopportune laughter is a result of ignorance,” and thereafter His Holiness adds, “Do“ not laugh to the extent where your teeth become visible regardless of your indecent actions. And a person who has performed ugly deeds is not free from nightly (afflictions.”(١

In this hadith Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) clearly states that the boisterous laughter of a person who as a result

p: ٣١٢

.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۴, p. ۴٨۶, Kitab al-‘Asharah -١

of ugly actions has a bleak future and a dangerous destiny, in such a way that it is likely for divine requital to befall him at any moment, is inappropriate; such laughter is admissible for a person who is certain about his future and is not worried about his destiny. This is in spite of the fact that we notice that even the Prophet (S) and saints [awliya’] of Allah did not have such surety and only put their trust in the mercy and .grace of Allah

:(Concerning the effects of excessive laughter on the heart, Imam al-Sadiq (‘a

Excessive laughter kills the heart.” Then, he also stated, “Inordinate laughter“ (dissolves religion in the same way that water dissolves salt.”(١

For this reason, we ought to keep aloof from inappropriate laughter which has no logical reason. Man ought not to lose his control over his mouth, tongue, eyes and ears. If he wants to laugh, he ought to see whether there is a reason for laughing and what the cause of laughter is, otherwise he ought not to laugh on every pretext .imaginable

It is necessary to mention that having a cheerful face and smiling at all times is

desirable and valuable and one of the social manners of the believers is to smile in their gatherings and when they meet one another—no matter how full their hearts may be filled with sorrow, grief, fear and dread—so that their conduct may not be a cause of inconvenience and bother for others; as has been

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.Ibid -١

:recorded in a hadith

Believers have cheerful and smiling appearances and their sorrow is hidden in their" (hearts."(١

This cheerfulness and smiling is different from loud and boisterous laughter which is not befitting of a believer. A pious believer who is focused and has faith in the resurrection does not overlook his works and movements and does not act on the .basis of the carnal souls and appetitive soul

The second characteristic which the Noble Prophet (S) considers as indecent for the ummah (Islamic community) is laziness and indolence. Sometimes, man does not discharge a certain duty as a result of heedlessness, like forgetting to perform some worship; in this case he has not perpetrated sin. But sometimes he feels lazy to .discharge a known duty consciously; this quality is not worthy of a believer

It is not acceptable of believers to consciously evade responsibilities. It is not acceptable of a believer to feel lazy when prayer time is due and upon hearing the call to prayer [adhan] and as a result be absent at the congregational prayers. This kind of disregard is not expected of a believer, whether this laziness is in regard to .discharging obligatory duties or recommended ones

One of the scholars of Yazd by the name of the deceased Haj Shaykh Ghulam Rida Yazdi was a very earnest man. One day he and I entered the mosque. When he saw a number of people sitting idly while waiting for the prayer leader [imam] and not

performing the recommended optional

p: ۳۱۴

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۶۷, p. ۳۰۵ -۱

prayers, he got angry and said, “Allah’s curse be on the Devil! Are you scared of being taken to paradise? Stand up and recite the recommended optional prayers!”

It is very proper that man engages in performing the recommended optional prayers once man enters the mosque before the congregational prayers and is not befitting of a believer to be heedless to this important issue. This matter is true in regard to the rest of the issues too; sometimes man lags behind in his studies as a result of illness, but sometimes laziness and seeking comfort prevent him from study and research. Basically, laziness and pleasure-seeking are great adversities which stand in the way of man’s growth and advancement and it is proper that we get rid of them in ourselves.

The Role of Meditation in Worship

:In continuation of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states

“O Abu Dharr! Two rak‘ats (cycles) of conscious and heedful prayer accompanied by meditation is better than one night of worship with a heedless heart.”

Taking into account the importance and prominent role of meditation and reflection, the Noble Prophet (S) states that two rak‘ats (cycles) of prayer performed in a conscious and heedful manner—not that they ought to be necessarily long—but along with thought have more reward and effects in the perfection of man than waking up at night and spending it all in prayer until morning without the presence of heart. Of course, if man recites his prayers very fast and with a lot of haste, he cannot perceive his duties

p: ۳۱۵

and pray in the correct way; as can be inferred from the hadiths, prayer with haste which is devoid of reflection, thought and heed is like a crow with its beak in the ground; that is to say, this prayer is not profitable and because it occurs without attention and is performed so fast that man does not find the opportunity to perceive the presence of Allah, and to reflect and meditate upon the context and purports of prayer. What is being asserted is that two rak'ats of prayer with consciousness and attention are better than long and repeated prayers without heed and presence of .heart

As has repeatedly been said, man's spiritual journeying consists of both academic and spiritual journeying; man's spiritual ascendancy depends on his intellect and the increase of his perception. In other words, man sets foot on the course of ascendancy towards Allah accompanied by knowledge. His gaining proximity to Allah does not imply changing places; there is no need for man to move from one place to another, but his becoming proximate to Allah is dependent on the increase of his intelligence and attentiveness, the rise and growth of his conception of the majesty of Allah and His Attributes; the more his awareness increases, the more he becomes close to .Allah

This kind of spiritual journey is called scientific [or academic] journeying towards Allah which is attained under the auspices of more knowledge and its first stage is awareness of the self which gives rise to

knowledge of Allah. In contrast, man lags behind in perfection and growth to the same .extent that he is ignorant

Prayer is a means of attaining perfection and is meant to make man feel more nearness to Allah. But if this prayer is devoid of attention and perception of the status of Allah, the person reciting the prayers is like a person busy performing exercise and stretches, because he has not derived any benefit from the context and purport of .prayer

Of course, prayer devoid of attention and presence of heart is better than sleeping all night long and not praying, or Allah forbid, being pre-occupied with perpetrating sin and evil doing. The very act of keeping vigil at night with the intention of prayer, even if that prayer does not procure complete reward because of being performed without the presence of heart, is a praiseworthy act but it is proper that prayer is accompanied by attentiveness and presence of the heart; in which case his movements become faster and he arrives at the destination faster, which is proximity .[qurb] to Allah

Lesson ۲۲: The Realm of Right and Falsehood

point

O Abu Dharr! Right is heavy and bitter while falsehood is light and sweet. All too often,“ ”.an hour’s licentiousness results in protracted sorrow and grief

Right and Falsehood and the Instances of Their Application

One of the general axioms which is discussed in Islamic culture and has wide applications is the concept of ‘Right and Falsehood [haqq wa batil]’. In the Gracious Qur’an, right and falsehood have been employed in regard to objects of worship; in

p: ۳۱۷

the case that Allah, the Exalted, is asserted as the right object of worship and the rest :of the objects of worship are known as false

ذَلِک بِأَنَّ اللهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ هُوَ الْبَاطِلُ...

That is because Allah is the Truth, and that which they call upon besides Him; that is“ (the falsehood...”(۱

Sometimes, right and falsehood are treated in the field of beliefs, opinions and notions and at times they are discussed in the scope of actions and deeds. One of the issues which the Gracious Qur’an teaches us is that the world is intertwined with right and falsehood. It can be asserted that the formation of this cosmos is combined of two

.elements; right and falsehood

Allah is the foundation of right and falsehood which is a parasitical matter that manifests itself under the auspices of right. On the basis of the teachings of the Qur’an, this mixture of right and falsehood is not eternal, a day will come when right will be completely separated from falsehood and will remain stable and falsehood will :be exterminated

بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ...

Nay! We cast the truth against the falsehood, so that it breaks its head, and lo! It“ (vanishes...”(۲

:Elsewhere, Allah likens falsehood to foam

أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَآءً فَسَأَلَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِيًا وَمِمَّا يُوقِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِى النَّارِ ابْتِغَاءَ حِلْيَةٍ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِثْلُهُ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِى الأَرْضِ كَذَلِكَ

۱- ۲۲:۶۲ Surat al-Hajj.

۲- ۲۱:۱۸ Surat al-Anbiya’.

يَضْرِبُ اللهُ الأَمْثَالَ

He sends down water from the cloud, then watercourses flow (with water) according“ to their measure, and the torrent bears along the swelling foam, and from what they melt in the fire for the sake of making ornaments or apparatus arises a scum like it; thus does Allah compare the truth and falsehood; then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits the people, it tarries in the (earth; thus does Allah set forth parables.”(۱

There is a delicate point, which becomes apparent once we pay heed to the reality of foam, in the comparison between falsehood and foam. Foam denotes bubbles which appear on top of water: when man looks at a water basin full of soap foam, he sees

bubbles floating and going up and down. If a person looks at that water basin for the first time, it is the foam which attracts his attention and he becomes heedless of the water under that water basin and is the source of that foam. He imagines that reality is this same foam which appears on top of the water floating up and down and has various colors, despite the fact that the foam has acquired its reality from that same .water and is itself under the auspices of water

The world is synthesized of right and falsehood, but falsehood exists as a parasitical ,companion of right. It is possible for falsehood to become more manifest than right

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.Surat al-Ra'd ۱۳:۱۷ -۱

to have a lot of sparkling, to have a lot of bloom and thrive, but in the laws [or principles] of nature right is like water and falsehood is like its foam and does not last long and becomes exterminated and that which endures is right that is beneficial to .people

Falsehood, like foam, is manifest for a few moments and after that, reveals its true reality and truth. Of course, once we measure these moments with our standards, we think that one moment ought not to last more than a few seconds or a minute, but a hundred and also a thousand years are nothing more than one moment for the One who has total knowledge of the past eternity and the future eternity; His standards .are different from our criteria

The criteria which we employ in measuring times and immortality [or continued existence] of things differ from the standards of [Allah] the Right. The length of times, whether it were a moment, an hour, a year or a century, does not have any credibility for someone whose perception conceives right. He perceives what is beyond our sights and conceives horizons which are very high and enduring and when he takes those criteria and standards into account, falsehood is not a matter worth paying .[attention to and it lacks endurance [or continued existence

The theme of the Noble Prophet's (S) words in this section is that right is heavy and bitter and falsehood is light and sweet. To explain this

p: ٣٢٠

sentence, it ought to be said that a believer who is pre-occupied with the prosperity of the hereafter must take the exigencies of his faith into consideration, reflect about his spiritual and psychological perfection and get rid of all the hurdles of the way and .attain his aim

It is natural for a believer who is at the beginning of the journey to expect everything to be light, easy, pleasant and sweet. He has not made himself ready to bear hardships and bitterness; it is for this reason that he is likely to stumble along the way and trespass the bounds of right and/or if as before he carries on along that way, he is sad and worried about all the hardships and problems along the path of good and .right

The question is always asked of man regarding why right is heavy and bitter and man is confronted by strenuous hardships but on the contrary falsehood is easy and sweet. Perhaps, this query may arise that, God forbid, is Allah stingy and does not let His friends derive benefit from the pleasures and sweetness of the world and places on their shoulders heavy and hard duties? What prevented Him from making right sweet so that all the people might become followers of the truth and not be ?misguided

When we compare the life of a believing person with that of an infidel, we observe that a believer has to endure a lot of problems; we notice how he has to kill themselves

p: ٣٢١

in order to procure one piece of licit bread, how he has so many problems with his family, mate, children and neighbors. In contrast, his corrupt and licentious neighbor

.or relative has a pleasurable and pleasant life and has no problem whatsoever

As a result of this comparison, he asks this question, "Why does Allah who, according to uncountable hadiths, loves the believers and has heaped a lot of praise on them, confront them with these encumbrances and hardships? Consider how much a believer has to suffer pains in order to procure the needs of his lives. Once he has made up his mind to marry, he sometimes has to search for years to find a suitable mate. Wherever he goes to ask for a girl's hand in marriage, they feign disdain and do .not give him a wife. But the others easily select wives of their choice

This same comparison exists between believing and infidel societies; when we compare the Muslim people of Bosnia-Herzegovina with their non-Muslim neighbors, we ask ourselves why the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina have to endure all these hardships and tragedies. Why do the unbelievers live in peace in their vicinity and neighborhood and the Muslim nation has to every moment bear seeing their lives, properties and families being trampled underfoot and for the callous Serb nation to prevail over them? If Allah is a Supporter of the believers, then why does He not help ?them

These questions arise in different forms for us and every person

has a response to them suiting his knowledge. But in any case, ambiguities exist for most of us. Perhaps, the people whose faith is mightier say that what occurs is based .on the expedience of Allah

There is no opportunity here to embark upon academic issues in order to give responses to these questions, amongst them the question as to why right is bitter and why Allah has not made it sweet so that all people might be inclined to it and not be seduced to falling into perdition and our aim is to derive practicable results from and strive to make the matter clear because if an issue does not completely become clear for man, it does not leave an impressive effect on the heart and/or the Devil seduces him and by bringing doubts up becomes a hurdle of effective fruits in the heart and

after the clarification of issues and overcoming the hurdles, there no longer remains .any room for doubts and the Devil's insinuations

Man and His Free Will, Volition and Allah's Temptations

Man's life in the world is founded on choosing the correct path and traversing the stages of perfection of his own volition. Man's most outstanding quality is that he is free and at liberty as regards his movements and spiritual wayfaring. Allah created existents like angels which only have an inclination towards right and even if their actions are volitional, their disposition is still only directed towards right and adoration of Allah and they have no tendency towards falsehood. Worship of Allah is

p: ٣٢٣

.sweet and pleasurable for them

Therefore, the order of nature is not devoid of existents which only have a tendency towards right and are exclusively preoccupied with servitude of Allah. For this reason, the will of Allah is dependent upon His creating an existent whose position is higher and loftier than that of the angels; that is why He made a human being who in spite of having an inclination to falsehood and the carnal soul, will trudge the path of his perfection of his own volition. Man ought to forsake the pleasure of sin in order to .attain eternal prosperity

If this existent tramples the appetitive soul underfoot and seeks the path of bliss, he will, without the least doubt, ascend higher than the angels for the reason that in spite of being faced with two conflicting dispositions, he of his own choice and volition .abstains from his pleasures and procures the spirit of worship and adoration of Allah

What has been gathered is that man in the world has two paths in front of him: one is the way of right and the other is the course of falsehood. Of course, it ought to be borne in mind that it is not true that once man selects any one of those two courses, .he is compelled to keep trudging that path

With regard to what has previously been mentioned—that man is a free-willed and

unrestrained existent—it must be admitted that as this free-will and volition is existent in

p: ٣٢۴

the initial selection of the way and path, so too is it existent in its constancy. For this reason, man always has the capacity to change his direction and course and he is endlessly free and at liberty when confronted by the two paths of right and falsehood. One of those two ways is the course of Allah and the other is the path of the Devil; one is the course of spiritual ascension and perfection and the other is the path of .decadence and condemnation

The other point which ought to be taken into consideration is that the world is a place of tests and trials and naturally it denotes a time when man is confronted by bitterness and hardships and comes out of the test triumphant by bearing with .patience those hardships

If spiritual ascendancy and perfection were sweet at first sight for man and falsehood and decadence were bitter, tests would be devoid of purport because trials call for man to forsake his desires and wishes and perform deeds for Allah and in the case that right were to appear sweet at first sight, man would disincline himself from the bitter falsehood and incline towards the sweet right for his own sake and for the good .pleasure of Allah

In the same way, if all falsehood were sweet and the course of right were devoid of any sweetness and pleasure, a person who abstained from falsehood and selected ,the correct path would be deprived of all pleasures; therefore

p: ٣٢۵

.it is not true at all that there is absolutely no gratification along the course of right

In any case, right is heavy and falsehood is bitter and it is natural for a person who has chosen the right course of his own volition to patiently bear all the bitterness and hardships of the path of right. Of course, Allah's divine decree is not the same for all

people, because the capacity of all individuals is not of the same manner and not all human beings have the capability to endure every kind of affliction and hardship; it is for this reason that Allah has a special divine decree for every human being; He decrees tribulations and problems for some people in their youth and for others in their old age. He afflicts one man with illness and another with poverty. He tries one man by means of his spouse and the other through his friend. It is not true that a believer will be guaranteed safety from any hardships and adversities because in this .case he would not attain perfection

For the reason that the world is a place of trials, a believer ought to strengthen his faith by means of enduring hard times and prove his loyalty to divine laws and his contentment with the divine will of Allah. With all certainty, this is a very hard undertaking, but he ought to patiently go through all these tribulations because he professes to be believer. But the infidel has

p: ۳۲۶

no such affirmation; on the contrary he has no familiarity with Allah and the truth. He wishes to be at ease in this transient world and whatever happens later is not a matter of his concern. If he performs good works in this world at all, Allah grants him :his reward right in this world

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيـدُ الْحَيوةَ الدُّنْيا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوَفِّ اِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ فِيهَا لاَ يُبْخَسُونَ * أَوْلَئِك لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِى الآخِرَهِ الاَّ النَّارُ وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوا فِيهَا وَبَاطِلٌ مَا كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

Whoever desires this world's life and its finery, We will pay them in full their deeds" therein, and they shall not be made to suffer loss in respect of them. These are they for whom there is nothing in the hereafter, and what they wrought in it shall go for (nothing, and vain is what they do."(۱

For this reason, people who seek the truth ought to be ready to endure tribulations and adversities and be content with whatever occurs because this is the exigency of selecting the right path. If an individual does not have the capacity to endure hardships, he must select a course other than the path of right. Advancement,

perfection and the super human spiritual stations are not attainable save by means of .perseverance in the face of tribulations

The secret truth is that right is bitter and falsehood is sweet and that the seeker of right ought to choose the right path of his own volition and be tried for his

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.Surat Hud ١١:١٥-١۶ -١

choice. If it were not like this, no human being would be tried and without the least doubt this trial is for the purpose of measuring the standard of faith and piety of individuals and their disposition to right and the other purpose is also to make clear ?the extent to which they prefer the will of Allah over their carnal souls

Therefore, there ought to be hard and tiresome duties so that man may by exercising piety and contentment with the will of Allah and patience in the face of tribulations traverse the course of perfection. If all duties were easy and simple, all the people of the world would become Muslims and the prominence and distinction of any person .would not become clear

It is in the battlefield of adversities, hardships, overlooking the carnal desires and putting the will and pleasure of Allah first that a prominent person like Salman Farsi shows himself and in arriving at the zenith and pinnacle of human perfection, leaves the rest of the people behind and attains the highest levels of completion and human .ascendancy

There is room here to relate the story of one of the ‘ulama’ (Islamic scholars) and great mystics, the late Ilahi Qumshe’i, may Allah be pleased with him. He was a great and emancipated man. This prominent and earnest man translated the Gracious Qur’an and did not receive any payment for doing that invaluable job despite that if he had got the right of publication, he and

his family would have lived in ease and leisure. He sometimes used to drive himself to .the university on a tripod wheeled machine despite being a university lecturer

On one of his journeys to the holy city of Mashhad, once he had entered the holy shrine of Imam al-Rida ('a), it occurred to him that he ought to ask for the station of contentment [rida'] from the Imam ('a). This is what impelled him to say, "Your .Holiness! Your name is al-Rida (lit. pleasure), and I have come into your house

Ask Allah to grant me the station of rida' (being well-pleased and content with whatever pleases Allah or is decreed by Him)." When he was coming out of the holy mausoleum and was heading towards home, he was accidentally hit by a car as a result of which he got injured and his bone got broken. The people gathered and arrested the driver, but the late Qumshe'i addressed them thus, "Leave him alone and let him go free. This is a gift from Imam al-Rida. I asked him for the station of contentment and submission to Allah's decree and I have attained it. If this accident did not occur, it would not become clear whether I have attained the station of contentment or not. I have to prove beyond the shadow of doubt that I am pleased "!with whatever pleases Allah and am not sad at all

Man and the Two Inclinations towards Right and Falsehood

Man has two different attractions in two directions; circumstances have to be provided

in order to clarify to what man is more inclined when faced with two antagonistic inner attractions towards right and falsehood. Sometimes, the right deed which he carries out is not opposed and is not at conflict with his desire and wish; in this case .discharging that work is not difficult

The problem lies where there is antagonism and disagreement between these two pulls; the devil commands one thing and Allah orders other than that, the carnal soul demands one thing and Allah enjoins the opposite of it. It is in these circumstances .that man becomes an object of trials and the value of deeds becomes apparent

In this case, the more the allurement towards sin and the more an individual tramples his carnal soul underfoot and opposes it, the more he will earn reward and that resistance against the appetitive soul has more considerable fruits in the perfection of .man's heart and soul

The value of a youth who in spite of having feelings and strong instinctive inclinations towards pleasures of the flesh but abstains from sin which is suitable with his youth is more than the worth of an old man who forsakes that sin. It is not difficult for an old man to abstain from that sin because he is not very inclined to that sin. In this case, the reward of that youth is more and in contrast if that old man commits that sin, his guilt is more because he was not under any pressure and was

(.not so inclined to that evil deed. (It is very ugly for an old man to commit adultery

If, Allah forbid, a youth finds himself on the verge of committing sin such as adultery or fornication and succeeds at prevailing over his animal instincts and passion, he ascends high spiritual stations and forsaking that sin brings to hand immense perfection because he has succeeded at overlooking sin as a result of a lot of inner effort and intense love for Allah and high faith. It is therefore natural for sin to be sweet in this world and for right to be bitter so that man may be tried and thus it will become clear who preferred Allah over everything else and who preferred right over .the carnal soul and who chose to pursue falsehood instead of right

Of course, it is self-evident that the nobility and eminence of man is dependent upon perfection being volitional and a fruit of free-will. He ought to be absolutely free and at liberty when combating the carnal soul and perform good works and forsake evil .deeds of his own volition and for the sake of love of Allah and His pleasure

It has been said that right is bitter and falsehood is sweet; but the sweetness of sin and the bitterness of sin is meant for ordinary people, not everyone. Ordinary people, on the basis of their natural disposition, pursue the desires and wishes of their hearts and duties which impose restrictions on them are hard

and unbearable. In contrast, falsehood is for them light and easy, because they do not .see any hardships and restrictions in doing it

It is very easy for man to utter vain and futile words, but once he decides to say meaningful things, he ought to reflect upon every word of his speech lest he utters void words and it is misconstrued as gossip, false accusation or slander and lest he makes fun of and torments someone. In that case, he meditates about the effects and fruits of his words. But if he wants to utter futile and vain words, he opens his .mouth and utters whatever empty words he wishes

The reason why it has been stated that the bridge over hell is thinner than a hair is because man ought to take the destination and the provisions of this journey into consideration whatever step he intends to take and whatever course he sets foot on along that path. He ought to ask himself whether Allah is pleased with his course or not. He ought to take the motive and incentive of every work into consideration and guard over his tongue lest he utters whatever crosses his mind and he must watch .over his eyes to avoid looking everywhere and at everything or everyone

Without doubt, observance of all its aspects is very hard and equal to performing toilsome duties. In contrast, if man intends to do everything according the futile whims and desires of his heart, he lives

easily and with pleasure and sweetness. Beyond the shadow of doubt, all adversities of the believer are confined to this world and he will not have any pains and hardships :in the eternal Garden of bliss

الَّذی أَحَلَّنَا دَارَ الْمُقَامَهِ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ لاَ یَمَسُّنَا فِیهَا نَصَبٌ وَلاَ یَمَسُّنَا فِیهَا لُغُوبٌ

Who has made us alight in a house abiding forever out of His grace; toil shall not" (touch us therein, nor shall fatigue therein afflict us."(۱

Not only is the eternal Garden of bliss devoid of hardships and tribulations, and nothing similar to what is in the world exists there but also even the dwellers of paradise do not feel hunger too but, on the contrary, feel appetite for food and derive pleasure from it. In contrast, the nature of this world's life is intertwined with pain and hardships and everyone is confronted with adversities and encumbrances whether he :is a believer or unbeliever

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الإِنْسَانَ فِى كَبَدٍ

(Certainly we have created man to be in distress."(۲"

This same world is different for the believers and the infidels, the lovers and companions of right and the lovers of falsehood. Those obsessed with falsehood enjoy relative ease and comfort and have a sweet experience from life but in contrast .life is bitter for a believer and lovers of the truth

Of course, it is not true that the entire course of the lives of believers and the friends of right are encompassed by bitterness; on the contrary, the bitterness of the world is for

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۱- Surat Fatir ۳۵:۳۵.

۲- Surat al-Balad ۹۰:۴.

them relative. There are special pleasures too reserved for the saints [awliya'] of Allah. They too derive pleasure from eating and sleeping, but their tribulations and .encumbrances in the world are more than the adversities of the people of falsehood

For the reason that man grows and is nurtured on the laps of nature, he naturally initially feels the sweetness and pleasures of the natural cosmos. His sense of taste is more prepared for the perception of worldly, material and sensual pleasures; it takes long for him to attain a spiritual experience and disposition. By means of volitional spiritual journeying along the right course and habituating himself with good deeds

and enduring the tribulations of life and forsaking material gratifications, man gradually tastes the spiritual pleasures and sweetness of right. This is a truth which :the Gracious Qur'an hints at too

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلوهِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلاَّ عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ

And seek assistance through patience and prayer, and most surely it is a hard thing" (except for the humble ones."(١

Allah states that prayer is a hard and heavy burden for all the people except the humble ones. Some people wake up early in the morning and get busy with exercise and work-out and perform heavy duties but feel lazy when they want to perform two rak'ats (cycles) of prayer. They do not wake up from sleep in order to pray but arise from sleep to do exercise often times take up to one hour exercising, running and/or !mountain climbing

They do so

.Surat al-Baqarah ٢:۴۵ -١

because their sense of taste does not perceive the feel of prayer. He feels the pleasure and benefit of exercise and he derives gratification because it has been said that exercise is beneficial and invigorating for the body. In contrast, his faith is not so strong and he does not believe nor has faith in the words of Allah, the Noble Prophet .((S) and Infallible Imams ('a

For humble people and men who have known Allah and have believed in Him, not only is prayer not a heavy and expensive burden, but is easy and pleasure-giving. Because they have attained spiritual maturity, they find affection and fondness with Allah during prayer and feel so much satisfaction from prayer that they do not desire to .bring their prayers to an end

For them, there is no pleasure higher than prayer and invocation of Allah; it is for this

reason that some of the great scholars have stated, "If the emperors of the world knew what pleasure lies in prayer, they would forsake the empires and purse nothing else but prayer." For the prophets ('a), the saints [awliya'] of Allah and those who have been trained on their school, right is so sweet and gratifying that they feel as though they have lost their most beloved person once they go beyond the bounds of right. They have become so fond of the right path and doing good deeds and have fallen so much in love with it that once they quit doing

a good work, they feel as though they have lost an item from which it is not feasible to detach one's heart. People who have a habit of keeping vigil at night feel very distressed once they fail to wake at night to engage in prayer and invocation of Allah.

The General Inclination to Sensual and Worldly Pleasures

Taking into consideration the fact that most of the people have an inclination to sensual and worldly pleasures, the point of discourse is that what ought man to do in order to remain on the course of perfection and to have the capacity to fight against materialistic leanings and set foot on the path of right in spite of feeling the animal instincts and pleasures of the flesh in himself?

In response to this query, it ought to be said that pleasure-seeking has been embedded in man's natural disposition and man's motivation for doing deeds is the gratification which he brings to hand. We do deeds which please us and keep aloof from what is displeasing to us. We conceive pleasure for ourselves even in the vanity and sin which we do but the way to forsake it is to reflect upon the fruits, consequences and encumbrances which result from sin, or meditate upon the pleasures that are a result of good works.

Even if enduring the hardships of good and right deeds is exhaustive, but still if the pleasing benefits and fruits of good deeds are taken into consideration, bearing those tribulations becomes easy for us. In reality, people have this

:kind of comparison when performing the hard and difficult chores of life

The laborer who embarks upon hard work early in the morning with motivation and works up to night time in sweat derives pleasure from enduring all hardships because he is engrossed in thinking about the fruits of his work. The baker who sometimes bakes bread at fifty degrees of heat bears all hardships because he earns a wage with which he procures the needs of his life. When he ponders about the results of his work and conceives that some of his problems in life will be solved, he derives benefit .from life and he easily bears the pains of his work

In reality, enduring these hardships is reasonable and all people are such that once they have compared hardships with pleasures, they do that which will grant them more gratification. If they earn more profit and wages from their occupation, in the end they attain more satisfaction. In truth, they do not directly derive pleasure from the profit and benefit of their labor, but it is a means by which to derive pleasure; he procures a house and the amenities of his life with the money which he earns from his work. For this reason, an intelligent man endures the hardships of work in order to .bring to hand higher pleasure in the end

An intelligent man keeps aloof from using drugs and his transient pleasure because he ponders about his long term ill effects. He knows

that he will derive pleasure for a few seconds and feels high, but he will be miserable for the rest of his life. If we admit that no matter how sweet and pleasurable sin might be, what consequences and encumbrances it gives birth to—if in the world we are not with bad consequences, beyond the shadow of doubt we will be encountered by them in the hereafter—it is for this reason that we keep aloof from using drugs. We also forsake sin because we fear lest we are entangled in eternal divine retribution .because of it

Transient pleasure which results in protracted regrets and entanglements appears in various forms nowadays. In the past, there used to be only alcohol which used to

intoxicate man and thereafter the ill and undesirable consequences would become visible; but nowadays different kinds of drugs have been added to them. A bad friend deceives man by explaining the pleasure and high which lies in a substance like heroin .and impels him to use it

Man feels pleasure the first time he uses it, uses it once more and finally becomes an addict and miserable for the rest of his life. Other sins too are like this. If we were to reflect upon the entanglements which the sin we are about to commit gives rise to, we would certainly keep aloof from it. In addition to the hereafter, a lot of sins have ill consequences right in this world. Sometimes, one licentious look at a strange

p: ۳۳۸

person makes the entire life of a person miserable and a household crumbles as a result of that licentious look. This is one of the consequences of sin in this world; the :divine retribution and requital of the next world have not yet been inflicted

فَأَذَاقَهُم اللهُ الْخِزْىَ فِى الْحَيوة الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ الآخِرَهِ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

So Allah made them taste the disgrace in this world’s life, and certainly the“ (punishment of the hereafter is great; did they but know.”(۱

:Elsewhere, it states

لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ فِى الْحَيوة الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ الآخِرَهِ أَشَقُّ...

They shall have chastisement in this world’s life, and the punishment of the hereafter“ (is certainly more grievous…”(۲

Therefore, by comparing the pleasure of sin with its consequences, we ought to try not to be contaminated by sin; especially before the attraction of sin affects us and we are not on the verge of sin, keeping aloof from sin is very easy because once the allurement of sin has had an effect in us and we have arrived on the verge of sin, it is very difficult to abstain from it. There was a great man, may Allah have mercy on him, who used to say that the youths ought to request Allah to tranquilize the carnal

.desires because in other than that case extinguishing them is difficult

Until man has not gone under the influence of carnal desires and/or anger, he is peaceful and he is capable of reflecting and making decisions and self-inspection so that he may have the

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.Surat al-Zumar ٣٩:٢٦ -١
.Surat al-Ra'd ١٣:٣٤ -٢

ability to resist the temptation to sin. But if he does not pre-decide and pre-meditate, he does not find the opportunity to think at the time of enticement by carnal desires or when overtaken by anger because the intellect is put out once man is enticed by .carnal desires

Besides the carnal desires and anger, the Devil has other means and forces too for misleading man, some of which are social causes: in the society, everyone naturally wants to be like the others. This is a psychological and spiritual cause which appears in man in his early days of life. Of course, this cause, like the rest of the causes, has both negative and positive results. What is necessary is to know the bounds of good and evil and derive benefit from this cause to the correct extent so that man does not .blindly follow and imitate

Conformity with the others in most cases is a cause of man's deliverance from destruction; a lot of youths who had the inclination of being like their good friend have been pulled to the mosque. So many youths went to the battlefield under the auspices of this very cause. In the beginning, they were not so interested in going to the battleground, when they noticed their friends and the boys in the neighborhood going .to the battlefront; they too got attracted to fighting

These are the good effects that this cause has. In contrast, in an environment which is corrupt and depraved, this very

cause becomes a means of getting disposed to sin, especially among adolescents and youths because adolescents and youths quickly acquire the characteristics of those around them and do not resist an indecent environment that much. But the factor of seeking to be like the others is weaker in those older and they seldom copy the .characteristics of other people

The role models for youths are either the majority of the community and/or prominent individuals and/or advanced nations. Once there exists in most of the people an inclination, a person is after imitating a role model tells himself that most of the people are normal and not mad; therefore, their actions are correct. Thereafter, he goes under the influence of that cause which we have mentioned and follows the majority of the people. It is for this reason that we see some of the people under the influence of this cause and they are allured to corruption; especially if the majority of .the community is depraved

Lesson ۲۳:The Perfect Scholar and the Practical Appearance of Belief in the Unity of Divine Actions

point

In continuation of the Noble Prophet's (S) recommendations, we come to a section regarding the unity of divine actions [tawhid-i af'ali] which stands in need of exposition: belief in monotheism [tawhid] has several stages, the lowest level of which is conviction in monotheism in Islam and every person who believes in that is considered as monotheist [muwahhid] from the viewpoint of Islam; belief in absolute unity of the Essence and divine Attributes of Allah and conviction in the existential sovereignty [rububiyyat-i takwini] of Allah and

the institutional lordship [rububiyyat-i tashri'i] of Allah(۱) and also certitude that the only object of worship is Allah. After this stage are other stages, one of which is .[conviction in the unity of divine actions [tawhid-i af'ali

The unity of divine actions denotes that man ought to comprehend first by knowledge and later on by intuition or inner witnessing that the real Influencer [or the only true One who causes or affects] in the cosmos is Allah, the Exalted, and there is no existent independent in effect. (Whether this belief is or is not compatible with the issue of free will and responsibility has been discussed in theological and philosophical discourses (.and there is no opportunity for us to engage in that now

As has been mentioned, there are two stages for the unity of divine actions; the first level is conviction in the unity of divine actions as a result of definite, deductive and demonstrative reasoning and knowledge that there is no existent which is in itself independent and every existent is like a connection and attachment to the Cause (Allah). All the effects and influences and causes and effects spring from the divine Essence of Allah. Even if this stage of belief in the unity of divine actions is very important and invaluable, still its worth is not the same with the value of the stage of .inner witnessing or vision of the unity of divine actions

The second stage: after attaining knowledge in regard to the unity of

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۱ -Monotheism in existential lordship [rububiyyat-i takwini] denotes that the management and will of the world is in the hands of Allah, the Exalted, and that we ought to believe that the revolving of the moon and the sun and the appearance of the day and the night, and that the life and death of human beings and giving subsistence to creatures is in the hands of Allah and it is He who safeguards the skies and the earth. In the same way, every existent which comes to appearance in this expansive world, and grows and multiplies, and every existential effect which appears from it, are all at the same time under the divine management and will and there are no phenomena which exist outside the realm of Allah. Institutional lordship [rububiyyat-i tashri'i] is related to the volitional management of people. Among all the creatures of Allah, only people have free will and control over their development and .gradual perfection

divine actions, man perceives and becomes convinced by way of spiritual wayfaring

and traversing and mystical intuition and vision that the real Influencer [mu'aththir] in the cosmos is only Allah. It is at this stage that he perceives that all else other than Allah, according to their strength and weakness, have no independent effect in the destiny of man and it is the will of Allah which has penetration and appears in the .causes and agents

Abraham and Belief in the Unity of Divine Actions

The best example of those who believe in the unity of divine actions and believe that the order of causes and effects is attached to the divine will and authority and have certitude that independent influencing is only a unique right especially confined to Allah, and do not take anyone save Allah as their safe haven and shelter, are the prophets (S) and frontrunners of religion. Here, we will mention the most excellent role model of the monotheists, a man who feared no one in calling people to the divine .(path, and he was none other than Prophet Abraham ('a

After resisting and not surrendering to the polytheists and idol-worshippers of Babylon, and after he had been breaking idols in their absence and after returning to their cities when they asked who had broken their idols, he used to engage in debate with them and used to prove as false and void their unfounded beliefs by means of sound and clear reasoning so much so that they did not have any response in the face

of his strong logic and the only option they had was to throw him in the fire of their :wrath

قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانْصُرُوا الِهَتكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِين

(They said: Burn him and help your gods, if you are going to do anything."(١"

After that they gathered a lot of wood and cast him into the core of the fire. At that moment, Prophet Abraham ('a) only set his attention on the divine Essence of Allah, to :the extent that Imam al-Baqir ('a) states

,On that day, Prophet Abraham (‘a) only said

« يَا أَحَدُ يَا أَحَدُ يَا صَمَدُ يَا صَمَدُ يَا مَنْ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ »

O One! O One! O Refuge! O Refuge! O He who begets not, nor is He begotten, O He“ ”.[whom none is like [Him

(After that, he said, “I only rely on You.”(۲

He had so much faith in Allah and was so firm in his faith that he used to perceive his entire being as being in need of the divine Essence and did not ask any one for help, .not even the angels in the proximity of Allah

:Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) states

When they cast Abraham in the fire, the arch-angel Gabriel, who was in a state of“ descending from the sky, saw him and said, ‘Do you need help and assistance?’ His (Holiness Prophet Abraham (‘a) said, ‘But not from you’.”(۳

This discourse of Prophet Abraham (‘a), which has been narrated by both the Shi‘ahs and Sunnis, denotes the high level of

p: ۳۴۴

۱- Surat al-Anbiya’ ۲۱:۶۸.

۲- Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۱۴, p. ۳۰۷.

۳- Ibid., p. ۳۰۸.

monotheism in the spirit and soul of this divine champion and it is this belief and spirit which made him befitting of receiving invisible help; Allah commanded the fire to become cold. They say that the fire got so cold that Prophet Abraham (‘a) begun shaking and gritting his teeth, so that Allah once again ordered the fire to become suitable and sound for him. The Archangel Gabriel descended and sat down with .Abraham in the fire and they began to converse

:Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) states

Qanbar, Imam 'Ali's ('a) slave, loved Imam 'Ali ('a) very much and armed with a" sword, he used to follow Imam 'Ali ('a) whenever His Holiness left the house and went out. One night, Imam 'Ali ('a) saw him and asked, 'O Qanbar! What is that you are doing?' Qanbar answered, 'O Amir al-Mu'minin! I came behind you in order to protect you.' Imam 'Ali ('a) stated, 'Woe upon you! Are you protecting me from the dwellers of the skies or the dwellers of the earth?' Qanbar answered, 'Not from the dwellers of the skies, but from the inhabitants of the earth.' His Holiness replied, 'The inhabitants of the earth cannot harm me save with Allah's permission, therefore, return and go (back.' Qanbar returned as ordered."(١)

Reliance on Everything Else Other than Allah Is a Result of Lack of Belief in the Unity of Divine Actions

What has been mentioned is a reflection of the belief in the unity of divine actions in the human perception, temperament and behavior of man and that man ought to rely only on Allah and not pay any heed

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.Usul al-Kafi (with Farsi translation), vol. ٣, p. ٩٨ -١

to anything else other than Allah regardless that before arriving at the stage of inner witnessing of the unity of divine actions, man depends on other people and imagines that he is in need of them and hopes that they will provide his needs and solve his .problems

Or, he fears that they will harm him. In reality, he believes in the independence of causes and effects in influencing events and puts his faith in them. With all certainty, this trend is not compatible with monotheistic thinking. The exigency of monotheistic knowledge is that man ought not to give his heart to and not rely on all else save Allah. :In this regard, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! A man does not attain perfect comprehension and complete" scholarship until he perceives people as camels lacking in understanding being moved

by Allah, the Exalted, and then he looks at himself and sees himself lower than all of ".them

It is interesting that the Noble Prophet's (S) expression is that no person is a perfect scholar until he perceives the will of people in the hands of other than them, like camels whose harnesses are in the hands of the camel driver and he guides the drove of camels and they have no free will of their own. Selecting the course of direction, arranging and managing duties are controlled by the one in whose hands are their .harnesses

In the beginning, man fantasizes that other people are independent in their

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movements, in their wars and victories and the events that come to pass. But when his cognition grows and he attains monotheistic knowledge, he conceives them as a convoy of camels whose harnesses are in the hands of someone else and the order of the movements of these causes as being in the hands of Allah. It is true that the causes and effects are at work and this order is in a state of movement, this order is not a series of movements. There is someone who has gotten the reigns and .harnesses of these horses in his hands

Of course, this does not imply that people are under compulsion, but the point is that absolute influencing is not in their hands; it is not true that they are the doers of all their deeds and the deciders of their affairs. They are under the influence of another order and a will above the human will controls them. Therefore, a monotheist is a person who does not forget Allah and does not overlook the hand of Allah in the order .of the cosmos; in other than this case, he has not comprehended monotheism

Of course, explaining this matter is not easy and exposition does not play a fundamental role in perceiving and understanding this reality, on the contrary we .ought to ask Allah to grant us the grace to conceive these realities

Man ought not to feel safe from the insinuations of the accursed Devil for the reason

that

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the Devil never at all leaves man free on his own. The Devil strives harder at misleading those who have set foot on the right course and are traversing the path of perfection. But weak people go after the Devil of their own volition and there is no .need for the Devil to deviate them

Shaykh Ansari and His Flight from the Devil's Trap

There is a well-known story that a person during the days of the deceased Shaykh Ansari saw the Devil in his dreams with ropes of various colors in his hands. Some ropes were green, red and orange and some of those ropes were thin and the others were thick. Among those ropes, he saw a very thick rope which had gotten broken. He asked the Devil what those ropes were. These are ropes with which I deceive and trap the son of Adam. That person asked about every one of the ropes. He was told which rope was a woman, which one was a house, money and position. That man .asked which one of the ropes was his trap

The Devil replied that there was no need to have a rope for trapping that man because he was so weak that he followed the Devil of his own volition. These ropes were for throwing around the necks of people who did not follow the Devil and by this means force them to come after me. That man asked whose the broken rope was. The Devil replied that he had taken lots of pains to make

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that rope ready with purpose of trapping Shaykh Ansari but last night when the Devil cast it around the neck of the Shaykh, he broke it with one shaking of the head. After .saying that, the Devil gave out a loud painful cry

That person woke up from sleep and spent the rest of the night sad and worried about what had occurred. Early in the morning, he went to visit Shaykh Ansari and related the dream to him. The Shaykh began crying and said, "Last night the time for

my wife was about to deliver arrived and the midwife and the other neighboring women said a woman in child labor ought to consume oil and ordered me to go and buy a little oil. I did not have any money with which to buy the needed oil. The only money with me was two tumans(۱) of the portion of the Imam [sahm-i imam] which I had put aside to give to anyone entitled to it. I got that same money with the intention .of buying oil for my wife

Along the way, all of a sudden, it occurred to me that what if the wife of another religious student got in labor tonight and that religious student did not have any money with which to buy oil? I told myself that perhaps in the outskirts of Najaf there is a student whose wife will get into labor and they have no money to buy oil for her. At once, I

.The Iranian currency -۱

returned home and put the money back in its place and said my wife will deliver with .or without oil

This was the trap which the Devil had set for me and he had been expecting and planning for this opportunity for nine months now. He intended me to take possession of the portion of the Imam but Allah granted me the grace to tear the Devil's trap and .rope

Yes the Devil devotes his effort to mislead people who have set foot on the course of perfection and trudging the path of completion. When man attains levels of perfection and awareness and his heart becomes enlightened and manifestations of monotheism become indisputably evident, or the unveilings of inspiration become apparent to him, he sees or hears something, the Devil visits man without the least delay and incites him that you have attained very high stations and you are very .different from the rest of the people

When man becomes successful at attaining this level of awareness of understanding

that other people are not independent influencers and they do not have such value so as to impel man to bow down before them for an amount of money and/or ask them for a favor, all of a sudden, the Devil insinuates him to think that he has attained very high levels and has become very important. In this instance, man becomes afflicted .by pride

It is with the intention to prevent such pride that the Noble Prophet (S) states that

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man ought to perceive the rest of the people as though they were camels next to Allah. Without any delay, he says that man ought to conceive himself as lower than everyone else. Perceive yourself as not just similar to the others, but even lower than the others and as a link in the chain of existents just like the rest of the links and the .chain of all the movements of creatures is in His hands

Therefore, if a person attains scholarship in religion, firstly he compares the rest of the creatures with Allah and perceives them as nothing, secondly he compares himself with the rest of the creatures and conceives them as better than himself, and .this is a very surprising quality

That is to say, Allah grants such grace to man, on the one hand, to perceive human beings as ineffective as regards influencing his life and does not give any value to them, and, on the other hand, observe legal customs. In spite of the fact that he does not believe in the role [or function or influence] of any human being, his humility, manners and respect in regard to them does not decrease. He observes legal .manners and truly perceives himself as humbler than the rest of the people

On the other hand, he perceives human beings similar to burden bearing camels in contrast to Allah whose harnesses are in the control of them and, on the other hand, perceives himself as smaller than the

p: ۳۵۱

camels. He ought not to imagine that once he has perceived the rest of the people as

camels, then he ought to fancy that he himself is their rider! On the contrary, he ought to perceive himself as both smaller and lower than the others and admit the meanness of his soul.

Of course, with this kind of perception, it is hard for man to count himself as small and be humble and modest; but this is possible and is real in the objective world. If man perceives this issue and at the same time not believe in the effect and role of other human beings, and also have perfect humility and modesty in regard to them, the responses to a lot of religious queries which exist in the divine sciences become clear.

In reality, with this exposition, the Noble Prophet (S) clarifies the limits of humility and that humility does not denote that a human being ought to make himself weak and servile in the face of other people. On the contrary, the humility expounded in the words of the Noble Prophet (S) increases the honor and greatness of man.

Humility Is an Agent of Dignity and Honor

It has been related in a hadith that Hasan ibn Jahm asked Imam al-Rida ('a) about the limit of humility. In response, His Holiness ('a) said:

"Humility has stages; one of those stages is that man ought to comprehend his value and esteem, and with peace of mind and of his own free will, attain his rightful position and behave with

p: ۳۵۲

people in the same way that they behave with him and if they have behaved kindly with him, he ought to behave in kind with them, and if they have behaved badly with him, he swallows his anger and forgives the people and Allah too loves the doers of good."(۱)

Beyond the shadow of doubt, such humility not only is not a cause of lowliness and servility, but also increases the honor and dignity of man. The Prophet (S) states:

"... Verily, humility increases the station of man; then, be humble so that Allah

(increases your honor…"(٢)

Some of the psychologists are of the opinion that if man perceives his self as lower and less valuable than the others, he is afflicted by an inferiority complex and in the end he cannot relate to the rest of the people; he cannot speak fluently, becomes afflicted by a lot of shyness and embarrassment and loses his self-confidence. He flees from the community and lives in isolation and solitude.

The question which arises is that how can a medium be struck between humility and self-confidence? That is to say, how ought we, on the one hand, to pursue humility and, on the other, preserve the soundness of psyche, and how must we preserve the vigor of our psyches at the same time as perceiving ourselves as smaller than the rest of the human beings?

It appears as though the fountainhead of a lot of psychological disorders in human beings (without having to overlook the role of

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١- Usul al-Kafi (with Farsi translation), vol. ٣, p. ١٨٩, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr.

٢- Ibid., p. ١٨٥.

the household and the environment) is the lack of belief in Allah and the lack of man's reliance on the great source of divine inspiration: if man loses this fundamental and important point of reliance, a storm of psychological dilemmas and crises overcome him and his psyche becomes a target of the arrows of diseases and disorders.

But if he regulates all his actions and reactions according to heavenly criteria, he finds salvation from a great deal of psychological disorders; it is for this reason that humility in the hadiths has been restricted only to modesty before Allah: "Whoever be humble before Allah, He increases his honor."(١) If man's humility before other human beings is only for the intention of pleasing Allah and his deeds were purely for Allah, he will never feel servile and low.

Therefore, humility is acceptable only if it results from purity of intention for none other than Allah, otherwise humility which is a product of weakness and inferiority .complex is devoid of any value and there is no reward for it

According to this analysis, it ought to be said that if man's humility is only motivated by obedience and adoration of Allah, not only is it not a cause of weakness, but is also a cause of pride for man; that is to say, he perceives modesty as a way of adoring Allah .and feels proud of it

In the same way that falling on clay and grinding one's forehead on the ground in prostration for

p: ۳۵۴

.Ibid -۱

the divine Essence does not cause lowliness in any believer at all, on the contrary, is gives rise to pride and honor in the same way that man's humility in the face of other people, on the condition that it is done for the good pleasure of Allah and for the cause .of executing his orders

Imam al-Sajjad ('a) and the Perception of Spiritual Deficiency and Poverty

By taking what has already been discussed into consideration, we can be helped to better understand why Imam al-Sajjad ('a), in spite of being infallible and of pure soul, :in the supplication he taught to Abu Hamzah al-Thumali, addresses Allah thus

Who is in a state worse and bleaker than mine? If I am transferred to the grave ... " "...right now, I have not made ready the provisions for my peace and tranquility

An Infallible Imam does not flatter any one and does not speak with the intention of) (.making funny jokes and all his words are serious

How the state of an Infallible Imam ('a) can be worse than that of the rest of the people is an intricate enigma which gets solved once man has had an acquaintance

with monotheistic sciences [or knowledge]. Once he perceives that all that he has is provided by Allah, he comprehends that whatever insufficiency that exists is ours and arises from our existential poverty. When we commit sin, it is either as a result of our lacking knowledge and our not knowing with Whom we are confronted and with Whom we are in opposition; or our resolution is so weak

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.that we surrender ourselves to carnal desires and anger

All these are indicative of our weakness and man has nothing save weakness. What do we have of ourselves that was not granted to us by Allah? Knowledge, comprehension, thought, worship and the grace to adore Him and do good deeds and everything that we have are all gifts from Allah. They have all been allotted to us as a .result of divine grace

He has also placed at our disposal the means, otherwise we have nothing save those same modalities of non-being (weakness and insufficiency) and if we want to separate our accounting from Allah, what remains of us is an empty container; .assuming that this expression of an empty container is correct

We of ourselves neither have wealth nor understanding and the intellect; what we have is ignorance, lack of custom, deviated conception and weakness of resolution, .which are instances of imperfection and weakness

If weaknesses and imperfections are a cause of deviation and error, a person who has more weakness and imperfection has more likelihood of being misled. A human being who has more weakness and defects is the one who has more existential capacity; a container which is bigger has more volume and needs more items to be filled up. When the existential capacity of man is more, he has to be granted more .perfection and in any case he has nothing from himself

One sparrow, in regard to its small size, has less capacity and Allah

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has granted it eyes, ears, the ability to fly and to make noisy sounds according to the limit of its capacity. If Allah divests it of all these capacities, your container will be empty of the size of one sparrow. But an elephant whose capacity is more, Allah has granted it limbs and members and ability and power according to its capacity. Now, if you divest it of all its capacities, its container becomes empty to the extent of one .elephant

Is our spiritual capacity the same as that of Imam al-Sajjad ('a)? Beyond the shadow of doubt, this is not true at all. Our capacity is very little and goes only so far as our understanding and intellect goes. It is for this reason that we will be chastised according to our capacity and never will we be held to account in the same way that Imam al-Sajjad ('a) will be held to account. The duties which the Noble Prophet (S) and the Imams ('a) are charged with can never at all be directed at us because we do not .have the ability to bear them

Therefore, our capacity is very limited in comparison to the capacity of the Infallible Imams; it is for this reason that our deficiencies and weaknesses are limited as well. When the Imam looks at the capacity which Allah has granted him, he witnesses a lot of weaknesses in himself because he has a great deal of capacity for what Allah has granted him

and is going to grant. It is for this reason that when he looks at himself, he conceives that his weakness is more than the weaknesses of all the other human beings for the reason that his capacity is more. That is why he says, "Whose state is worse than "?mine

Is the sin of a mistake and error of an adolescent who has just attained the legal age to discharge religious obligations and has little knowledge the same as the sin of a scholar who has spent fifty years studying hadith and Qur'anic sciences and commits the same sin? Without the least doubt, the sin of that scholar is more because he has .more capacity and capability

The sin of that adolescent is very small because the understanding and capacity that he has is very limited, and taking into consideration the high capacity of that religious scholar, his sin is doubtlessly more and his retribution is going to be more severe. It is :for this reason that it has been narrated in a hadith

Seventy sins of an ignorant man will be forgiven before one sin of a scholar has ... " (been forgiven..."(۱

The sin of an ignorant man is less, because his understanding and capacity is less. To grant an impossibility, if an Infallible Imam were to commit sin, his retribution is a thousand times more than the retribution of ordinary people because his perception .and capacity is more

When the Imam looks at himself, he conceives that whatever obedience

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲, p. ۲۷ -۱

and worship and praiseworthy deeds he has performed are all from Allah, the Exalted, and has been discharged with his grace and nothing remains of him save weakness and because he perceives his weakness more, he is more guilt ridden than the rest of the people. This was a justification and accounting for the words of Imam al-Sajjad .(('a

If man's inner eyes become more open and he is able to perceive realities more, he perceives how weak he is in the face of Allah. He conceives that there is no room to feel pride of and perceive his self. Was he not a drop of liquid which has been nurtured ?to attain this stage

Now that he has grown and attained physical perfection, has he brought himself to this stage so as to feel proud of himself? Therefore, if we truly look at ourselves, we perceive ourselves as lower and humbler than all the human beings; not that we .ought to pretend to be humble

It is hypocrisy for man to apparently appear humble and falsely claim with his tongue that he is lower and humbler than everyone else but perceive himself as better and .higher than the rest of the people

We ought to consider ourselves smaller and humbler than the rest of the people from the depths of our hearts. This state is not attainable save by means of divine grace and the light of awareness which Allah makes to shine in man's heart. I hope that Allah will

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.grant us this knowledge and awareness and even higher than that

(The Fruits of True Faith in the Words of the Noble Prophet (S

:In continuation of the hadith, the Prophet (S) says

O Abu Dharr! You cannot attain the reality and truth of religion unless you perceive as" ".dull in regard to their religion and clever in regard to their world

O Abu Dharr! Once you have perceived the reality of faith and you notice that other people have made advancements and are active in their lives in this transitory world, know that they are clever and have understanding and intelligence in regard to their lives in this transitory world but they are very ignorant and foolish in regard to their .lives in the next world

In the Noble Prophet's (S) statement, the expression 'kulluhum (all of the people)',) that is to say all the people are like this because the ones who are not like this are scarce; in this regard, in contrast to the majority of the people who are fools, the wise (.are not considered countable at all

Wise is a person who, when faced with deciding between useful and useless, profitable and profitless, chooses the useful and profitable. When we compare the transient world with the eternal hereafter, we perceive that the hereafter is more rewarding and profitable, for the reason that both from the point of view of length

and from the aspect of infiniteness—the earthly lifespan of man ranges between seventy and eighty years and/or does go beyond a hundred years; even if we were to imagine that man's lifespan were

p: ٣٦٠

to last a thousand years, but still it is reckoned as nothing when compared to the eternal life of the last world—and also from the point of view of quality: the pleasure of the world is attained by way of enduring painstaking toil and exertion, and in addition to that, is intertwined with labor and hardships but we have gotten so accustomed to pains and hardships that we content ourselves with that same .gratification which is mixed with hardships

How much hard work do we have to do for the pleasure of food? We have to make money and with that procure food and even after then our jaws become tired when chewing the food. All these pains and hardships are undertaken for the sake of putting food in our mouths so as to derive [transient] pleasure from the food. In addition to that, we get tired and worn out by the effort to acquire our needs. But the pleasure of the last world is not coupled with pain and tiredness. Man does not expend any effort to procure or derive benefit from the pleasure of the hereafter and not :even after using it

... لَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَلَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا لُغُوبٌ

(toil shall not touch us therein nor shall fatigue therein afflict us."(١..."

The hereafter is higher than this world in regard to quality and also from the point of :view of the length of durability of its everlastingness

وَالآخِرَهُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى

(While the hereafter is better and more lasting."(٢"

p: ٣٦١

.Surat Fatir ۳۵:۳۵ -۱

.Surat al-A'la ۸۷:۱۷ -۲

Taking into consideration the unimaginable superiority of the hereafter over the world, which one of those two does the intellect select after comparing them with each other? Without the least doubt, the intellect selects the hereafter, but among mankind there are very few people who do such kind of comparing and act according to the deduction of their comparison for the reason that a lot of people have not .attained the reality of faith

But people who have attained the reality of faith, in addition to preferring the hereafter over the world, know that people are wise in regard to their world but are ignorant in regard to their Last Abode. In connection with earthly affairs, they distinguish very well between what is profitable and unprofitable, and are cognizant of their material benefits but have no awareness of the hereafter. They do not believe .that there is a hereafter and that it is superior to the world

Perhaps, the secret of the Noble Prophet's (S) words is that once a believer has arrived at this conviction that the majority of people are ignorant and uninformed in regard to their religion, they do not try to follow them in life and take a separate path from them. They try in connection to the Last Abode to take lesson from the errors of other people and follow the right path. From another point of view, in connection with the world they try to derive benefit from the experiences of other people, of

.course by following the rules and laws of religion

Lesson ۲۴: The Importance of Self-examination, Comparing Works and Shame for Allah

point

This section of the Noble Prophet's (S) advises is related to self-inspection and shame of Allah. In the hadiths, and amongst them in the Nahj al-Balaghah (the Peak of Eloquence), a lot of emphasis has been laid on self-examination of the soul and the

scholars of morals believe that one of the initial stages of edification of the soul and .spiritual way-faring and journeying is self-inspection of the inner being

O Abu Dharr! Hold yourself accountable before they hold you accountable, and in“ ”.order for your accounting to be easy tomorrow

:The likeness of this subject matter has repeatedly been related in other hadiths too

(Hold yourself accountable before you are held accountable.”(۱“

But in this hadith something more has been added that does not appear in the rest of the narrated hadiths and that is that self-examination in the world makes accounting .in the Resurrection lighter and easier

Self-examination Is an Unavoidable Need

The axiom of self-inspection and examination of man’s conduct is an unavoidable issue and is understandable and perceivable. Every person has some accounting and inspection to do in his life; accounting is very important especially for those who do earn money and the businessmen whose occupation involves investments, money, .profit and loss

Usually, every seller checks his account at least once a year, but in addition to this yearly accounting, he checks his accounts on a daily, weekly and monthly basis also so that at the end of the year his checking and

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۰, p. ۷۳ -۱

balancing of accounts may be easier. If that businessman does not check and balance his accounts on a daily or weekly or monthly basis and allows his account books to increase, his work at the end of the year becomes hard and sometimes makes big .mistakes as a result of heedlessness and inattention

What is being asserted is that just like a trader who checks and balances his accounts

with careful attention to know how much profit and loss he is making and does not bypass a single coin, a believer too ought to settle his accounts with Allah and in this regard he ought to be careful of the trickery of his soul and fear lest his soul deceive him by justifying sins and in this way not let him settle his accounts with accuracy. He ought to demand a convincing reply and hold himself as accountable as the divine .agents will hold him accountable on the Day of Resurrection

Principally, accounting for sin is more accurate if it occurs on time and is not left to accumulate and man gets a more accurate result and is confronted by less problems on the one hand and on the other hand if accounting for sins is delayed, with the passage of time we forget what sins we have committed and thus they accumulate. In addition, when we pay no heed to our sins, we do think about the alternative and .also we do not believe the thickness of our sins

If

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it were asked of me what sins I have committed and I were very honest, I would say a thousand sins despite that if I were more accurate in my accounting, I would gather that perhaps in a day, week and month I commit more than a thousand! When all these sins are put together, a great astronomical figure is made. We are heedless and we imagine that because we have not committed theft and murder, the rest of the sins are not worthy of the name. Perhaps, if we were called sinners, we would protest and say, "What sin have we committed to be called wrong doers?" The nature of .man's soul is forgetfulness, especially in regard to that which is harmful for it

One of the psychological subjects is that because mentioning and reminding man about his errors and sins gives rise to shame and shyness, he is not inclined to pay heed to them and he endeavors to forget those shortcomings. Nowadays, psychologists have made a lot of progress in the field of forgetfulness and remembrance of events which have come to pass and how man ought to forget things and what factors play a role in forgetfulness and how man ought to make himself forget things and also in regard to what causes give rise to a strong memory

so that man may easily remember events? Unfortunately—in spite of the fact that examining and analyzing these topics is good and very important for our religion and world—we

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.have not made advances in these fields and have lagged behind the others

Therefore, man does not like to attribute that which he does not like to himself. According to psychological research, man who is after committing every kind of crime and iniquity strives to justify his sins. Because of the pain which he endures as a result of committing that sin and for the reason that he seeks to get free from guilt of consciousness, he desires to evade the guilt of perpetrating sin and, in other words, he strives to show himself as not being at fault and endeavors to either forget his sin or lays the blame on other people, or the environment, or the world, or the Devil, or .the structure of the society and/or other factors

In this way, he takes refuge in these defense mechanisms in order to defend himself and once seeking refuge in a defense mechanism becomes firm in man and he justifies every sin and does not hold himself accountable and does not judge fairly in regard to himself and did not condemn himself for his sinful deeds, there is also the danger of committing greater sins for the reason that he with his action has liberated himself from the scourge of sin and on account of that he has no pain and remorse so as to be dreadful of the consequences of sin. It is here that the ill consequences of justifying sins and also its dangers are greater than the

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.ill consequences of sin itself

Because man has self-love, in addition to wanting to be respectable in the society, he also desires to be proud of himself; he does not want to be ashamed of himself and perceive himself as incomplete. He wants to conceive himself as complete and honorable. For this reason, he expels from his memory that which is a cause of his

incompleteness and decadence; because remembering them gives rise to his feeling .low and light and this is opposed to the natural inclination and desire of man

Taking this point into consideration, if in this regard there are no factors which remind man of those imperfections and defects and deviations, a bad end lies in wait for him and he will have to bear irreparable losses. It is for this reason that in the hadiths in the direction of mentioning factors which remind man of his bad deeds and effort to make up and compensate for them has been chosen as the best way and the scholars of ethics, taking these hadiths into consideration, have mentioned the three stages of 'preconditioning', 'alertness' and 'accounting' for people who plan to undertake edification of character and purification of the soul in such books as "Mi'raj al-Sa'adah", "Jami' al-Sa'adat" and "Ihya' al-'Ulum."

Preconditioning, Watching over the Soul and Self-examination

point

Preconditioning [musharitah], watching over the soul [muraqibah] and self-examination [muhasibah]

(a) Preconditioning [musharitah]

When man wakes up in the morning, he ought to pay heed to this fact that new capital has been placed in his hands: if we did not wake

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up from sleep and the soul left our bodies for ever, would our life not come to an end?

اللهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنْفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِي لَمْ تَمُتْ فِي مَنَامِهَا فَيُمْسِكُ الَّتِي قَضَى عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْأُخْرَى إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

"Allah takes the souls at the time of their death, and those that die not during their sleep; then He withholds those on whom He has passed the decree of death and sends the others back till an appointed term; most surely there are signs in this for a

(people who reflect."(1)

Therefore, by sleeping, we pass through a stage of death and we lack any activity in the same way that the dead lack activity. Now, once we wake up again from sleep, a second life has been granted to us and new capital has been placed at our disposal. For this reason, we ought to thank Allah and address our souls in this way, "O soul! Allah has placed this invaluable capital at your disposal so that by means of it you may secure the prosperity of the hereafter. If you commit error, you will lose your capital and meet with loss and failure."

We ought to set conditions with our souls and get it to promise and pledge not to come close to sin and not to do anything which will result in the anger and discontent of Allah. We ought to make our souls promise to use this invaluable capital in the

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١- Surat al-Zumar ٣٩:۴٢.

way that is pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, and gives fruit to prosperity for man because the pleasure of Allah results in man's prosperity and if Allah is not pleased, man cannot and does not attain prosperity. We ought to set conditions on our souls not to be lazy at discharging incumbent duties [wajibat] and divine duties and not to abstain from doing every good deed that is feasible for it.

It is better for this preconditioning [musharitah] to de done after the morning prayers and the supplications that follow it [ta'qibat] and man has to address his soul in this way, "O soul! I have no capital save this limited life and if I lose it, all my capital will have been lost in thin air. O Soul! Today Allah, the Merciful, has again granted me a grace period and if I were dead today, I would wish that Allah returns me to the world so as to make ready my provisions. For this reason, O Soul! Imagine that you were dead and requested to be brought back to the world and you were brought back. Therefore, be careful lest your today is wasted for the reason that every breath that you take is a precious and invaluable jewel and it is possible to attain eternal pleasures by means of it so as to give fruit to lasting peace."

[b) Watching over the Soul [muraqibah

After the stage of pre-conditioning [musharitah] comes the stage of watching over the soul [muraqibah]; this denotes that during the

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course of the day man ought to be careful to act according to what he has preconditioned on himself and be careful at every moment not to commit sin. He ought to see whether he is traversing the right path or the way of sin and error.

To put it another way, watching over the self is tantamount to piety [taqwa], because piety implies watching over divine values and protecting good works: it has been narrated in a hadith that piety is similar to a man who walks in the darkest of nights in a desert full of snakes and scorpions and it is possible for that every moment he may step either on a snake or scorpion and put an end to his life once bitten by them.

Now, in the same way that he takes utmost care and makes sound judgment so as not to be bitten by either a snake or scorpion, man has to also have perfect precaution and care to go free from the danger of the Devil and not be afflicted by the retribution of the hereafter. Therefore, piety denotes that man has to continually meditate about his deeds and perceive the consequences of his deeds.

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"A man came to the Noble Prophet (S) and said, 'O Prophet of Allah! Give me some advice.' The Noble Prophet asked him three times, 'Are you going to accept my advice if I give it to you?' The man replied, 'Yes O Prophet of

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Allah.' The Noble Prophet (S) stated, 'If you make up your mind to do something, think about its consequences. If the results of your decision are good, discharge that work and if its end were bad, abstain from it.'"

Keeping permanent watch over the self is attained as a result of knowledge of Allah

and due to certitude that Allah, the Exalted, is aware of the inner secrets of man and nothing is hidden from Him. For this reason, there is no deed which man commits without needing watch over the soul at the time of doing it because man in his deeds is either in a state of obeying and worshiping Allah and/or in a state of committing sin .and/or in a state of doing deeds that are permissible but not recommendable

His watching over the self at the time of obedience and worship of Allah denotes that he ought to have purity of intention and striving in the direction of perfecting his deeds and observing the etiquettes of worship and protecting his deeds from decadence. His self-vigilance at the time of sinning implies repentance, feeling remorse, detaching his heart from misdeeds, feeling shame and resolving to make up .for his wrong doing

His watching over the self and being vigilant at the time of doing permissible but not recommendable deeds means that he observes correct conduct and always keeps in mind the Giver at the time of deriving benefit from the blessings of this world and being thankful for

.those gifts and bearing afflictions with the utmost of patience

[c) Self-examination [muhasibah

Self-examination [muhasibah] is the third stage which the scholars of hadith have recommended for the edification of character and purification of the soul. Self-examination denotes examining his daily deeds at the end of the day and asking himself whether he has discharged the divine and incumbent duties which lie on his .shoulders or not

If after self-inspection he perceives that he has discharged his divine duties and his daily deeds were concordant with the legal criteria, he ought to be thankful to Allah for granting him the opportunity to perform his duties for the reason that discharging divine duties is dependent on the grace of Allah and man ought to be thankful for that

.term

Likewise, he ought to try on the other days to continue that same sound and correct path. But if he has not discharged his divine duties, or he has performed them imperfectly and has been afflicted by error and deviation, he ought to endeavor to make up for them by discharging recommendable [mustahabb] and especially optional prayers and castigate himself and repent when he has not discharged his divine duties and has committed sin against Allah so that Allah may forgive his sins.

Likewise, he ought to try to make up for his sins by doing good and praiseworthy deeds; in this case, his sins will be compensated for at the time of sleeping and no sin remains for him. This is that same self-examination which

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the Infallible and Pure Ahl al-Bayt ('a) have recommended for their companions and scholars of ethics on the basis of the orders of the Infallible and Pure Ahl al-Bayt ('a) have advised other people to be accountable for their deeds.

Taking into consideration the role and importance of self-examination in the edification of the character and purification of the soul, Imam al-Kazim ('a) states:

"He is not from us a person who does not hold himself accountable for his deeds; therefore if he has done good deeds, he ought to ask Allah to increase his good deeds and when he has committed sinful and bad deeds, he ought to seek forgiveness from Allah and return to Him."(۱)

The Noble Prophet (S) orders his companions thus:

"Should I inform you about the most intelligent of intelligent people and the most ignorant of ignorant people?" The companions responded, "Yes, O Prophet of Allah." The Noble Prophet (S) stated, "The most intelligent of people is the one who holds his soul accountable and performs good deeds for his life after death and the most foolish of people is the one who follows his carnal soul and always asks Allah to grant him his wishes."(۲)

One of the benefits of holding the soul accountable is that once man has perceived his errors, he immediately makes up for them and does not let their effects to remain in his soul. If man does not hold himself accountable, he will not know how many sins he has committed. If

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.Usul al-Kafi (with Farsi translation), vol. ۴, p. ١٩١ -١

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٧٠, p. ۶٩ -٢

it were asked of us how many good deeds and how many ugly and unacceptable .works we have done and where we committed error, we would not know

But when we have undertaken to hold the soul accountable for its deeds, we remember every one of the deeds we have done and know how many of our sins .were corrected and how many were not corrected

When man does not pay any heed to the sins he commits, those sins leave an effect in his soul and a black spot is created in his heart and with the increase of sin, the blackness and darkness of the heart encompasses his heart and, all too often, no bright spot remains in it. This point has been inferred from the purport of some of the :hadiths, one of which is Imam al-Sadiq's ('a) statement

Whenever an individual commits sin, a dark spot arises in his heart. Therefore, the" blackness of the spot is erased whenever he repents and it is increased whenever he commits sin, to the extent that it becomes predominant over his entire heart and (never will he get guided."(١

Sometimes, man does not comprehend this and when he understands that sin has encompassed his entire heart and if he compares his present state with his previous .state, he perceives that a blatantly obscene change has taken place in him

Some of the people who for some time are pre-occupied with learning and acquisition

of knowledge, taking into consideration the decline which

.Usul al-Kafi (with Farsi translation), vol. ۳, p. ۳۷۳ -۱

they witness in their souls, morals and conduct, thus tell themselves: at the beginning of education, we had high spirits and purity of heart, what has caused that high ?spiritedness to decline by the passage of time

Some people blame this decline on studies; they imagine that studying causes the darkness of heart. This group of people does not want to concede that their sins are the cause of the decadence and degeneration of souls and the darkness of their hearts. Without the least doubt, studying is one of the good and invaluable deeds of man; even if sometimes these same good deeds of man have a great deal of defects .which arise from the weakness and inattention of man

This is one kind of self-deception which man lays his blame on once he sees that he gets tired of studying and/or he has no hope of being successful, or when studying is not compatible with his carnal desires, he blames it as a cause of his defect and decadence and says that studying has caused his heart to become dark because at the beginning of our studies and education, our hearts were pure! It is true that at the beginning our hearts were pure and now they have become impure, but the cause is not studying; on the contrary, the cause is not studying correctly. The cause of darkness of our hearts is sins and education devoid of purification of the soul and .edification of character

Yes, when man does

not hold himself accountable, the real and existential effects of sin do not get effaced and make his heart black and he does not have the least attention. This is similar to a person who wears white clothes and black spots regularly fall on it and he does not

pay any attention to them and does not see that his clothes have become dirty and impure, without the least doubt with the continued increase of those black spots his clothes become so dirty and disgusting that they raise the disgust of every looker, but .the owner does not know anything because he has closed his eyes

The greatest defect and loss of abstaining from holding the soul accountable for its deeds is that the effects of sin remain embedded in his soul and man day by day becomes more contaminated and his heart becomes darker and he becomes more distanced from Allah but he himself is not aware of this and often times he imagines that he is a good and capable man and falsely prides himself on being this and that. In spite of the fact, everyday he is declining and in the end he falls in the pit of :decadence and ill fate

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالاً * الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِى الْحَيَوةِ الدُّنْيا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا

Say, 'Shall We inform you of the greatest losers in their deeds? These are those" whose labor is lost in this world's life and they think that they are well

p: ٣٧۶

(versed in skill of the hands'."(١

Allamah Tabataba'i, may he reside in Allah's Garden of eternal bliss, in interpretation ' of this verse, states: "Loss and failure in regard to work and occupation whose aim is making profit occurs when that goal is not attained and/or when capital is decreased and/or once man's efforts are wasted. In the blessed verse, wasted effort implies losing and wasting effort; like when man loses his way and does not arrive at his .destination as a result of that

Sometimes, man's losing in work and occupation is a result of inexperience at work" and/or not being acquainted with the way and/or because of other undesirable causes. This loss and depletion is likely to be made up for the reason that there is hope of the loser waking up and starting all over again and regaining what has been lost and making up for the past. But sometimes it happens that man meets with loss

and imagines that he has made profit. He makes loss and believes that he has attained nothing save profit! This is the worst loss and misfortune for which there is .no hope of making up for

Man's duty in the world is only to struggle for prosperity and he ought not to wish" save for that. If he is on the path of right and has attained his aim, he has arrived at the goal. But if he deviates from the right path and does not conceive his deviation and mistake, he has

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.Surat al-Kahf ۱۸:۱۰۳-۱۰۴ -۱

.made loss in his efforts and endeavors but there is hope of his being saved

But if he deviates from the right path and attains other than right and insists on it and never does a ray of right become manifest for him, a curtain has been drawn over his soul and has made him afflicted with the self-conceit and pride of the Age of Ignorance. This person is the biggest loser in his deeds and efforts for the reason that there is no hope in making up for his losses and there is no hope of his attaining (prosperity; this is that same point which Allah has mentioned in the blessed verse."(۱

As has been previously said, one of the benefits of accountability of the soul is that man perceives his errors and embarks upon correcting them. He does not let the .existential effects of sin remain in the soul and gives rise to its degeneration

The Noble Prophet (S) has explained this reality with two expressions which are: "Hold your soul accountable before others hold you accountable;" and after that he states, "Because that will make your accountability easier tomorrow on the Day of Resurrection;" for the reason that if you hold yourself accountable for your deeds, you embark upon remedying and making up for your errors and deviations and the .result is that your accountability on the Day of Resurrection will be light

But if you do not do thus, your sins will accumulate and your problems on

.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۳, p. ۴۳۰ -۱

the Day of Resurrection will be increased. In the world, you do not know and are unaware of how much you have fallen, but when you will be confronted with the list of your deeds and see your innumerable sins, regret as a result of those sins is more torturing than the torture of hell. In continuation of the hadith, the Noble Prophet :states

Weigh yourself before they weigh you and be ready before you are presented in the" presence of Allah on the Day of Resurrection before there is nothing which remains ".hidden from Him

:In regard to the weighing of deeds, Allah, the Exalted, states

وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ...

(And the measuring out on that Day will be just..."(۱"

Measuring and weighing of deeds is one of our religious beliefs. Measuring of deeds denotes comparing and counting their ampleness and meagerness, now if we embark upon measuring our own deeds and conceive that our sins have become heavy, we try to make our burdens lighter. But if we do not embark upon weighing our deeds, and do not weigh our sins and do not perceive their effects on our souls, one day we will find ourselves in the presence of Allah and there we will be disgraced and be .caught in regrets

Therefore, a person who measures his deeds and holds himself accountable for them will be light-burdened in the presence of Allah for the reason that he has made up for his sins and ethical weaknesses. But that person who has

.Surat al-A'raf ۷:۸ -۱

not undertaken to weigh his deeds and hold himself accountable for his deeds, he will be regretful on the day when his great and small deeds will be made apparent before Allah, the Exalted.

In order not to be affected by regret on the Day of Resurrection, start meditating right now and perceive your deeds right now. Imagine that your lives have come to an end—because no one is certain whether he will remain alive tomorrow or not—and your deeds have been presented to Allah. Perceive what you have presented to Allah and what state you have before Him.

If the Pure Imams (‘a) take refuge in Allah on the Day of the great presentation when all deeds are made apparent before Allah, it is befitting that we hold ourselves accountable for our daily deeds and make up for any ugly and undesirable deeds we have committed so that they are erased from the record of our deeds in order not to be afflicted by the remorse and regret of that day, which is one of the most deadly regrets.

Shame as a Result of the Ugliness of Works

Without the least doubt, once talk about the presentation of works before Allah comes about, discussion about shame and disgrace of Allah also arises. When man does a bad deed and/or perpetrates treachery and thereafter forgets, he is indifferent and no change arises in his soul. It is for this reason that we are weak and we do not correctly conceive realities and also for the sake of gradually perceiving reality and

the truth, we cite a sensible example: imagine that two people have been friends for long years and had promised not to betray each other.

Now, if one of those two betrays his friend, if his betrayed friend was not aware of the treachery and/or forgets the betrayal, his conduct is normal when he meets his treacherous friend. But if his friend takes pictures of the scene of betrayal and after a

period of time shows it to the betrayer and says, “You had promised not to betray me and used to talk a lot about the value of friendship, why then have you betrayed me?”

It is here that shame and disgrace overtakes the betrayer which is harder than torture and punishment. He had committed treachery and had forgotten the scene of treachery and did not believe that his friend had known about his betrayal. If his friend shows him the scene of his treachery, what state is he going to be in?

We have given an example of filming and taking pictures of the scene of treachery for the presentation of deeds in the world, but on the Day of Resurrection deeds themselves will be present. Even if our intellect does not conceive the manner of the presence and embodiment of works, but on the basis of our religious beliefs, the embodiment of deeds has been proved:

... وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا...

“...and what they had done they shall find present there...”(١)

In this verse Allah explicitly explains the

١- Surat al-Kahf ١٨:۴٩.

presence of deeds themselves and it is not possible to interpret the verse otherwise and in addition to this verse, other verses also have explained the embodiment of deeds; amongst them:

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ...

“On the day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil...”(١)

Even if on the Day of Resurrection, pictures and films of our works were shown, we still could not deny them. If they show us the works themselves and/or present films of them, and say that on such a day at such and such a time or on such a night you did

such a deed, when we come face to face with Allah, the shame that will overcome us .will be harder than any torture

In order for man to remember the Day of Resurrection and the presentation of works on the Day of Resurrection, it is befitting to picture or describe the scene of presentation of works and the disgrace of sin and disobedience of Allah and/or if it is disgraceful right in this world, man ought to picture it for himself. He ought to imagine that he were doing some ugly deed and all of a sudden a child appeared and saw his .ugly deeds

Perhaps, it has occurred for every person that he was busy committing an ugly deed without looking around himself and all of a sudden finds out that someone

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.Surat Al 'Imran ۳:۳۰ -۱

else has been watching him. In such circumstances, man becomes so ashamed that he wishes he could become water and sink in the ground; worse if that person were not a child but a full grown man having enough understanding and intelligence and worse still if that person had a right on man and that ugly deed were a betrayal in his .right

There is no doubt that whatever we have is from Allah and every indecent deed is considered as treachery against Him. If man thinks properly, he will perceive that he commits sin in the presence of the Owner of Right and it is a betrayal to Him; he conceives that he is sinning against the One who gave him existence and his ability to .commit this same misdeed is from Him

The power of breathing and speaking and everything that we have is from Him. He has given us all these blessings and abilities in order to employ them in the way of our perfection and gaining proximity to Him, therefore it is very shameful of us to use Allah's blessings in the way of sin and distancing ourselves from Him and treachery .against Him

Taking into consideration what has been mentioned, if man sets apart a few minutes of every night to holding his soul accountable for what it has done and visualize his deeds before himself, in the presence of Allah who is the Giver of whatever he has, without the least doubt this self-examination and

taking into consideration the fact that error and sin occur in the presence of Allah will lead to a reduction of sin, even if it does not lead to sincere contrition and repentance which leads to a complete effacement of all the sins; just this feeling of shame reduces an amount of the burden of sin and prevents the settlement and establishment of the effects of sin and after that man does not easily commit sin. Now, once this state of admonition and attention to the fact that he is in the presence .of Allah becomes his permanent disposition of mind, he will not commit sin anymore

The Concept and Domain of Shame and Shyness

O Abu Dharr! Be modest with Allah. I swear upon Allah at Whose disposal my life is,“ whenever I go to present my needs to Him, I cover my head and face and feel shy of ”.the two angels accompanying me

The issue of shame and modesty is very important and unfortunately there exist wrong and unsound understandings in regard to it. As a result of the influence and penetration of foreign culture, intellectual problems have arisen for us in regard to shame and modesty. For this reason, it is befitting for us to examine or ponder about this issue. Even if we are inclined in this opportunity to content ourselves with mentioning admonitions and perhaps we may not have a session for preparing a plan for these subjects, but still we find it necessary to cite the intellectual substructures of :this issue

We all know

that in the Islamic culture, shame and modesty are as worthy values and, in contrast,

impudence and lack of shame are considered as uncouth and counter values. In the past, whenever they wanted to curse or use indecent words at someone, they used to call that person impudent because the word impudent used to be considered as an insult and a curse. Whenever they wanted to emphasize and deepen their curse, they used to call that person unashamed. Calling someone unashamed used to be a very bad insult in our culture. But nowadays, in western culture and the world of infidelity, .shame and modesty are considered as defects

One of the issues that has a lot of application nowadays in psychology, the philosophy of ethics and personal training and instruction is the issue of shame and modesty. Should man be shy and modest in the point of view of psychology, ethics and the principles of personal instruction? Of course, when we say that in western culture, in contrast to Islamic culture, lack of modesty is encouraged, we do not mean that our understanding of shame and modesty and our conduct are completely correct; it is for this reason that this topic or category is in need of examination and for the sake of :making the subject clear, we will hint at the root of shame and modesty in man

On the basis of the innate instinct which exists in man's natural disposition, if man ,commits a deed which he knows is indecent

a special emotion by the name of shame arises in his inner being. Of course, the appearance of this psychological emotion and spiritual reaction depends on two matters: the first is that man ought to perceive his deeds as bad, and the second is that his natural temperament ought not to have been ridiculed because man has a lot of natural states, but when he tramples his natural disposition underfoot, those .natural states become weak and faint-colored and bit by bit become effaced

Therefore, the feeling of shame in regard to bad and ugly deeds is a natural thing, but knowing the ugly and bad sometimes takes place by means of the intellect and at other times by means of personal training and instruction and at other instances man follows the environment and generally held beliefs in order to decide what is good and .bad

In the beginning, parents inculcate their child with what is bad and what is good, now if that inculcation is properly done, once a child does something bad and becomes aware that someone is observing him, he feels ashamed and embarrassed as a result of his natural temperament and instincts and drops his head and sometimes even sweats. This reaction in connection with an ugly deed from that child is natural and as has been said, he learns the good and bad by means of personal training and .instruction from his parents

The Causes of Propagating Wrong Manners and False Customs

Besides ethical and Islamic values, another set of manners and customs which have been

promoted and circulated among us as a result of the demands of the environment, the society and/or as a result of tribalism and other national and racial causes and .thus we consider certain things as either good or bad

This perception is not related to the divine law and it is likely that they may even be against the divine law: for example, we conceive as bad a child speaking in front of an elderly person and as soon as a child wants to speak in front of an elderly person, we say, "Keep quite! This is bad." Because a child learns what is good and bad from his .parents and those around him, he imagines that this is indeed a very bad deed

The very fact that he notices other people reacting negatively in regard to his deeds and frowning and showing an unpleasant reaction, he comprehends the badness and ugliness of his deeds and feels shy and ashamed when he does that deed. For this reason, he does not dare to talk in the presence of an elderly person, and feels shy to .speak in class and to ask questions from the teacher

With the passage of time this state becomes his permanent habit of mind and the more he grows and his age increases, he feels shy and ashamed at the time of speaking. When he intends to ask questions in higher classes and contribute .positively, his heart beats and his color changes

Without the least doubt, divine

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law does not approve of man not being able to speak out his opinion, or to ask his question or speak the right word.

The likeness of this wrong understanding exists in regard to the modesty of a woman; in our culture a woman's biggest capital is modesty, but in relation to the instances of applying this value concept, our society has gone to improper extremes. A chaste and veiled girl is brought up in such a way that she is not able to utter a word in front of a strange man and they make her perceive that this is the proper result and reflex of modesty.

From the Islamic point of view, a woman has to nurture her power of speech in the presence of other people, but it is very proper and acceptable not to speak in instances where there is no need to speak and/or not to make her voice so soft and tender so as to attract the attention of other people; but she ought not to be made to believe that never has a strange person got to hear her voice. In reality, we have not been successful at separating different issues and aspects from each other.

If a woman's speaking in front of other people were unacceptable, who would have managed to make that fluent and excellent speech which Her Holiness Fatimah al-Zahra' ('a) made in the Mosque of Medina? Or, who would have managed to make that speech which Zaynab Kubra' ('a)

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made in the session of Ibn Ziyad? Yes, divine law says that a woman ought not to speak in such a way that attracts and deviates others and the way of speaking is not supposed to be motivated by arousing the sensual feelings of other people, otherwise it is not proper for a woman not to have the ability to speak.

We have some extremist tendencies and in some sense prodigality in one set of issues—especially ethical and instructional values—which have left behind very bad

effects. When westerners noticed these extremist tendencies and embarked upon remedying their ill effects, they fell into prodigality and put aside those values from the origin. We came forward and raised our children to be shy and not speak in front of the elders. We have brought up our women so as not to be able to speak in front of .men

When the westerners noticed that was improper and wrong, they went further and asserted that a child has to be absolutely free to do whatever he wants and a woman has to be free and not be shy or ashamed of anything; even if she were to strip naked in front of men! This improper understanding of shame and modesty and feeling shy has had such an effect in the West that they have completely done away with ".limitations and restrictions: "An ignorant man is either excessive or prodigal

Neither have we comprehended Islam correctly nor have the westerners traversed the right path. Neither have

we applied the values of Islam correctly nor have they paid any heed to divine values. Of course, we cannot have any expectations from them because the basis of their .thinking is corrupt. It is not even clear whether they have any faith in God

In the West, it is not clear whether even believing Christians who go to church have any faith in God and only profess their faith in religion and religious values by the tongue otherwise in reality they have no inclination towards religion. Therefore, no expectation can be had of them. The question is why have we not correctly comprehended the truths of Islam and have not correctly acted upon them and have not properly applied them and have not derived right and praiseworthy benefit from ?them so as not to be reproached by other people

Taking what has been said into consideration, it is incumbent for the realm and domain of shame and modesty to be made clear. We have to clarify what the concept of shame and modesty is and where are they proper and where are shyness and modesty unacceptable and blameworthy? Without doubt, being shy is not desirable in

all instances and not every weakness that arises as a result of shyness is good or desirable. Good and bad ought to be known and made compatible with decisive logic .[‘and divine law [shar

Why do we tell our children that speaking in front of elderly people is bad? Is this Allah’s and the

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Noble Prophet’s (S) order? Was the conduct of the Pure and Infallible Imams (‘a) like this? Without the least doubt, this is not true at all. Yes, shouting and hollering is not good for anyone at all and, of course, bit by bit a child learns as a result of correct teaching how to speak in such a manner that the listener hears him and not to raise .his voice higher than the limits; but not that the child completely ought not to talk

Who has said that a woman ought to be so shy as to not have even the ability to talk in front of other people such that if she wanted to prove her claim in court or to enjoin ?!what is right and forbid what is wrong, she even lacks the ability to utter a word

Therefore, we ought to set good and bad on Islamic criteria; we ought to perceive what is bad and what is good from an Islamic point of view; that is when shyness and modesty in contrast to what is really bad are desirable, not the modesty which is a custom and habit made and enjoined by one special community, tribe, nation and/or .race and location

This modesty is a product of manners and customs, not ethical and spiritual values. Manners and customs, if they are in the direction of Islamic values, are respectable and if they are opposed to what is right and divine values, are counter values. Therefore, in

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order for us to properly follow the injunctions of Islam, we ought to first know the real .bad and real good so as to know when to feel shy and modest

It has been said that knowing the good and bad, on the basis of natural instincts, after doing an ugly deed man feels shy. Now, if he resists this natural instinct and fights against his natural disposition, bit by bit, that natural instinct of shame and modesty becomes weak; and the quality of immodesty becomes firm in man. This matter is not confined to shame and modesty; on the contrary, if man resists every natural instinct, .that natural instinct becomes weak bit by bit and becomes ineffective

For people who commit sin and pay no heed to its consequences, bit by bit, the quality of sin becomes strong in them and after that, even if they know that they are committing sin in the presence of Allah, they do not feel any shame because their .natural temperament has been subdued

Yes, lack of self-inspection of the soul and not holding it accountable for its deeds bit by bit renders man's natural disposition ineffective and in the end man does not have any qualms with committing sin and does not reprimand his inner conscience. Man who initially used to feel ashamed whenever he committed sin no longer has any .qualms about committing sin

Of course, there are other causes too which lead to the extermination of shyness and modesty and mention of

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them has been made in the hadiths, but the main cause of lack of shame and immodesty is resistance in the face of the natural instinct of shame and modesty and paying no heed to it. In contrast, in order to strengthen that natural instinct, certain points have to be taken into consideration amongst which is the point which the Noble Prophet (S) has recommended to Abu Dharr that he ought to feel shame in the face of Allah and thereafter states, "Whenever I supplicate Allah, I cover my head and face and feel shy of the two angels accompanying me." This conduct is intended to .strengthen the natural instinct of shame and modesty

:Abu Sa'id Khidri in regard to the immense modesty of the Noble Prophet (S) says

The Noble Prophet (S) was more modest than a virgin girl in the bridal chamber and" used to keep quite whenever he got angry and we used to discern his anger from his (face."(1)

It is well-known that Salman Farsi stated, "I have never in all my life looked at my private parts." Salman lived a very long life and beyond the shadow of doubt a person who is like this does not commit adultery or fornication. But if man is heedless, and does not make any difference between good and bad, bit by bit his natural modesty gets effaced and the causes and incentives of sin impel him towards sin. He is continually on the verge of sin and collapse. But if

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱۶, p. ۲۳۰ -۱

he is careful of his conduct right from the beginning and strengthens his natural instinct, the spirit of shame and modesty becomes firm in him and he does not get .contaminated by sin

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of various sects and creeds as well as by currents hostile to Islam. The Assembly follows in the footsteps of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and the disciples of their school of thought in its readiness to confront these challenges and tries to be on the frontline in .consonance with the demands of every age

The arguments contained in the works of the scholars belonging to the School of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) are of unique significance. That is because they are based on genuine scholarship and appeal to reason, and avoid prejudice and bias. These arguments address scholars and thinkers in a manner that appeals to healthy minds and .wholesome human nature

To assist the seekers of truth, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly has endeavored to present a new phase of these arguments contained in the studies and translations of

the works of contemporary Shi‘ah writers and those who have embraced this sublime .school of thought through divine blessing

The Assembly is also engaged in edition and publication of the valuable works of leading Shi‘ah scholars of earlier ages to assist the seekers of the truth in discovering the truths which the School of the Prophet’s Household (‘a) has offered to the entire .world

The Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly looks forward to benefit from the opinions of the .readers and their suggestions and constructive criticism in this area

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating .(the genuine Islamic teachings as preached by the Prophet Muhammad (S

We beseech God, the

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Most High, to accept our humble efforts and to enable us to enhance them under the auspices of Imam al-Mahdi, His vicegerent on the earth (may Allah expedite his .(advent

We express our gratitude to Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi, the author of the present book, and Mr. Kelvin Lembani (Muhammad ‘Abd al-‘Aziz), its translator. We also thank our colleagues who have participated in producing this work, especially .the staff of the Translation Office

Cultural Affairs Department

The Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly

Lesson ٢۵: The Path towards Paradise and Manifestations of Divine Modesty

point

The Noble Prophet (S)(١) once more reminds us about the importance of modesty and :decency and tells Abu Dharr

“O Abu Dharr! Would you like to enter paradise?”

Abu Dharr responds, “Yes, may my father be sacrificed for you.”

The Noble Prophet (S) mentions three fundamental conditions with the intention of inviting Abu Dharr to heaven and eternal bliss:

“Cast long-drawn-out dreams out of your mind. Always perceive your death as close at hand. Have proper modesty towards Allah.”

Disapproval of Long-Drawn-Out Dreams and the Difference between Them and Positive Hope

One of the subjects upon which a lot of emphasis has been laid in the hadiths is that a believer ought to abstain from long and protracted wishes. Endless desires are a hindrance to man’s fulfilling his divine duties and pursuing his spiritual goals and impel him to abandon his religious obligations and sacred aims in the hope of attaining his cravings.

Long-drawn-out dreams cause man to become heedless about the present, thus not perceive currently available opportunities. Because of the unbecoming role of endless wishes in keeping perfection and the sublime prosperity of

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١- The abbreviation, “S”, stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, sallallahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam [may God’s blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny], which is mentioned after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S). [Trans.]

the hereafter at a far distance, the devil uses them as effective tools to mislead the servants of Allah:

إِنْ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلاَّ إِنَاثًا وَإِنْ يَدْعُونَ إِلاَّ شَيْطَانًا مَرِيدًا * لَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ وَقَالَ لَأَتَّخِذَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيبًا مَفْرُوضًا * وَلأُضِلَّنَّهُمْ وَلأُمَنِّيَنَّهُمْ...

“They invoke none but female (deities) besides Him, and invoke none but a rebellious Satan, whom Allah has cursed, and who said, ‘I will surely take of your servants a

settled share, and I will lead them astray and give them false hopes...'"(1)

It is in connection with this danger of interminable yearnings and because they infect man with erroneous doubts and thereafter impel him to perpetrate minor sins and later greater sins and crimes that Imam 'Ali ('a)(2) perceives them as a threat:

"O people! What I fear most for you are two things—acting according to desires and extending of hopes. As regards acting according to desires, this hinders one from the truth; and as regards extending of hopes, it makes one forget the next world."(3)

In order to differentiate between positive hope and interminable vain wishes, the notion of endless cravings ought to be explained, especially when we take into consideration the fact that the concept of ambition is somehow associated with the notion of hope and that which is the essence of life and making effort—whether in connection with material matters or spiritual issues—is positive hope.

If one were to have no hope in regard to improving his state of affairs and in worthy benefits which derive from good

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۱- Surat al-Nisa' ۴:۱۱۷-۱۱۹.

۲- The abbreviation, "'a" stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, 'alayhi's-salam, 'alayhim'us-salam, or 'alayha's-salam [may peace be upon him/them/her], which is mentioned after the names of the prophets, angels, Imams from the Prophet's progeny, and saints ('a). [Trans.]

۳- Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon [khutbah] ۴۲, trans. Fayd al-Islam. [For English translation see http://www.al-islam.org/nahj [۹], ed.]

deeds, he would neither fulfill his worldly nor eschatological duties, and to quote the words of the Gracious Qur'an:

مَنْ كَانَ يَظُنُّ أَنْ لَنْ يَنصُرَهُ اللَّهُ فِى الدُّنْيا وَالآخِرَهِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ بِسَبَبٍ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ لِيَقْطَعْ فَلْيَنظُرْ هَلْ يُذْهِبَنَّ كَيْدُهُ مَا يَغِيظُ

"Whoever thinks that Allah will not help him in this world and the hereafter let him

extend a rope to the ceiling and cut (himself) off, and let him see whether his plan (would remove that which enrages (him)."(1)

On the basis of this translation, when a man has no hope in the help of Allah, he is always entrapped and caught up in a state of anger, wrath, wavering of the mind and hopelessness and he is perpetually restless and anxious. As a result of this excessive lack of hope, he is not able to take steps forward towards either his own well-being or that of others. He may not commit sin and crime, but he will not take positive action either. It is for this reason that positive hope and protracted futile aspirations are .different—positive hope is the incentive for man's development in life

Hope in Allah gives fruit to rewards in the hereafter and hope in the graces of Allah is one of the ethical virtues. In this same aforementioned hadith the Noble Prophet (S) asks Abu Dharr if he would like to go to paradise; that is to say, does Abu Dharr have the hope and aspiration to go to the garden of bliss? This question drives

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۱- ۲۲:۱۵ Surat al-Hajj.

home the point that hope is acceptable and praiseworthy and that which is not proper .and undesirable is interminable deceptive wishes and vain worldly cravings

Therefore, a believer is not one who is devoid of hope nor is he one who lends his faculty of reasoning to inferior worldly yearnings because this faculty is more honorable than that it should be pre-occupied with thinking about low worldly ambitions; on the contrary, his hope is totally focused on Allah and on gaining .proximity to Him

?The World: Means Or Goal

The world is not beneficial by nature. It is beneficial only to the extent that it is an instrument or means; that is to say, man should strive for the world, but not such that the world becomes his final goal. Worldly effort should be a means of attaining the bliss of the hereafter; otherwise, if the hereafter were not the aim, ordinary worldly

efforts would not have an intelligible and correct justification—even worse is a .situation where a person nurtures protracted wishes in his mind

Man's efforts in the world have to be concentrated on fulfilling his duties and obligations, whether in the domain of individual issues or in the realm of social matters, and these obligations should be done for the pleasure of Allah and success in the hereafter; otherwise, from the Islamic point of view, his endeavors and actions will not be acceptable and they will be subjected to reproach. In the same manner, placing hope in the world ought to be with the intention

.of attaining the afterworld

If man intends to make his worldly deeds a means of attaining the happiness of the hereafter, he ought to bear in mind that those worldly activities which play a role in achieving the bliss of the otherworld, and are not a hurdle to spiritual matters, are limited. For this reason, he ought not to preoccupy his thoughts and mind with worldly affairs, because the capacity of man's mind, thinking as well as creative powers, is limited: once man is preoccupied with pondering about one topic, he is hindered from .reflection about other issues

When his attention is captivated by one thing, he is held back from thinking about other matters. If round-the-clock man is absorbed in contemplating about earthly matters most of the time—he is immersed in thinking about his house, wife, food, clothing and he is obsessed with his social status and, in short, he is absorbed with that which is connected with the world—his mind becomes so preoccupied that he has no opportunity to think about the hereafter. He even dreams about worldly matters .when he sleeps

If one is a career person or a businessman, he dreams about checks and promissory notes. Or, we see the architect that is always absorbed with building affairs and the problems of architectural work who dreams about these issues in his sleep, too. A person who has not married is preoccupied with the thought of selecting a wife, or if

he is married but has no child, he

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is absorbed in thinking about having a child and with these mental preoccupations, he can no longer think about the hereafter, spiritual matters and the aim of creation and .his future

These daily duties preoccupy man's mind in such a way that he no longer has the time to accomplish his obligatory [wajib] duties, and when he is through with his daily affairs, he begins thinking about the next hundred years and what will happen to his !grandchildren and great grandchildren and all his descendants

How will his children marry and settle down? How will he make a living? Without the least doubt such a mind and heart cannot engage in thinking about spiritual matters, pains of the afterworld, diseases of the soul, cankers of the heart, nor social issues, all .of which are associated with the pleasure of Allah

It is very unfortunate and saddening that at times even spiritual matters are often used as tools for attaining the world. This is another loss and calamity for mankind. It is not surprising at all when a career person uses his income as a means for securing worldly cravings, but what is amazing is that a person might use religion as a means of securing worldly aspirations, meaning that he makes religion a trade for attaining .earthly goals

Such a person is a traitor to religion and, in the words of the hadiths, he acquires his daily bread by means of selling his religion. What a loss! How unfortunate and ill-fated is

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a person that uses his religion as a means of securing his worldly ambitions and carnal yearnings. As one of the Infallibles ('a) has stated, the benefit of such a person from religion is equivalent to the income which he earns and he gains no other benefit from .religion

One who makes his religion as a means of attaining worldly desires will derive no“ (benefit from his religion but that which will lead to his perdition.”(1)

Attention to the Absolute Self–sufficient Results in Freedom from Want from Other than Allah

Once a believer is set on the course of knowledge and awareness of Allah as well as executing his divine duties, he no longer thinks about his worldly affairs for the reason that Allah is his guardian, providing his earthly needs. Of course, this does not mean that he ought not to work but that he should not preoccupy his mind with the world: the trader, farmer and craftsman who undertake effort to make money do so for the sake of securing the pleasure of Allah not for the sake of merely securing their worldly .desires

Blessed is the tradesman who uses the world as means for attaining the hereafter .and woe upon him who trades the hereafter to achieve only his worldly aspirations

Definitely such a person will not attain his ambitions in life and his soul will be traumatized and full of stress all the time because, despite perceiving himself as attached to religion and familiar with it, he lacks real faith in religious and divine values, has not conformed his knowledge with his deeds and

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۸, p. ۶۳ -۱

.does not have faith in what he says

Such a person becomes an object of Allah’s wrath and Allah does not provide him with the tools and means of attaining his worldly aims. It is for this reason that we see that such people experience failures and become unsuccessful in life and neither derive .benefit from the world nor from the hereafter

However, when a believer trudges the course of faith and sets foot on the path of propagating divine beliefs and sciences, Allah opens the way for him in connection with the life of the world and manages his life in such a way that man does not even

need to think about the world and there will not be the least worry in his mind with regard to material life. As Allah stated to the Noble Prophet (S) on the Night of the :[Ascension [laylat al-mi‘raj

He (Allah’s servant) keeps trying to get closer to Me by means of optional prayers“ [nafilah] until I love him. [After] loving him, I will become his ears with which he hears, his eyes with which he sees, his tongue with which he speaks and his hand with which he strikes. When he asks from Me I answer, and if he demands from Me I will give (him…”(۱

The chain of transmission of this authentic hadith has been recorded in books like “Al-Kafi” and its purport has also been inscribed in other hadiths. Various interpretations have been put forward for the expressions which have been

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۴, p. ۵۴, hadiths ۷-۸ -۱

recorded in this hadith, one expression being that Allah stated, “I become his ears… eyes… hands…” Eminent scholars like Shaykh Baha’i and Imam Khomeini (may Allah .be pleased with them) have put forward several interpretations in this regard

Imam Khomeini’s (may Allah be pleased with him) interpretation in his book entitled “Forty hadiths” is as follows: “The more the heart is pre-occupied with all else besides Haqq (i.e. Allah) and is engaged with the edifices of the world, the more will be its need ”.and longing for the world

However, the need of the heart and the longing of the soul are very apparent, because its attachment and affection to the world has filled all the corners of the heart. It is natural that its external need too should increase because there is no person who can manage all his affairs alone. Perhaps the rich are apparently considered to be without want, but a precise glance at their affairs makes it clear that their needs increase with the increment of their riches. For this reason rich people are poor people in the semblance of the self-sufficient and they are needy people

.dressed in the clothing of the affluent

The more the heart is engrossed in managing worldly affairs and the more it is absorbed with the fanfare of the world, the more man is overcome by the pain of abasement and humiliation and the more he is overwhelmed by the abysmal .darkness of disgrace and need

In contrast, once a person tramples the

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inferior world underfoot and concentrates his heart and soul's attention on the Absolute Self-Sufficient and believes in the essential need [or natural poverty] of all existents and comprehends that no being is self-sufficient in and of itself and that there is no power, glory and majesty save for Allah, he becomes free from want of both worlds—so free from want that the kingdom of Solomon is worthless in his point .of view

If the keys to the treasures of the world were given to him, he would not pay any attention to them; as has been recorded in the hadith that the Archangel Gabriel brought the keys of the treasures of the world from Allah, the Exalted, to the Seal of the Prophets (S) and that holy man showed humility and did not consent to the offer and instead chose poverty as his pride.(١) Also, Imam 'Ali ('a) told Ibn 'Abbas, "This (world of yours is more inferior to me than this worn out shoe."(٢

They know that being absorbed in the treasures of the world and its wealth and riches and companionship with the lovers of the world gives rise to darkness and opacity of the heart, weakens man's will and determination, makes the heart needy and .destitute, and hinders it from concentrating on the Absolutely Perfect

However, when the heart has been put under the care of its Owner and the house has been submitted to the Landlord and has not been surrendered to a usurper, Allah manifests Himself

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۱- One of the angels of Allah who had never come down to the earth descended with the Archangel Gabriel carrying the keys to the treasures of the world and addressed the Noble Prophet (S), "O Muhammad! Your Lord sends his peace and states, 'These are the keys to the treasures of the world. If you want, you can be a prophet who is poor and if you desire, you can be a prophet possessing power and a kingdom'." Then after that Gabriel made a sign to him and said, "O Muhammad! Show humility!" The Prophet (S) stated, "I will be a poor prophet." Thereafter the angel accompanying Gabriel returned to the sky... (Amali Saduq, majlis ۶۹, p.۳۶۵, hadith ۲)

۲- 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas says that when Amir al-Mu'minin set out for war with the people of Basrah, he went to his audience at Dhi Qar and saw that he was stitching his shoe. Amir al-Mu'minin said to me, "What is the price of this shoe?" I said, "It has no value now." He then said, "By Allah! It is dearer to me than ruling over you, except that I may establish right and ward off wrong." Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon [khutbah] ۳۳.

in it. Of course, the manifestation of the Absolute Self-Sufficient brings about absolute self-sufficiency and submerges the heart into the sea of honor and riches and fills it with freedom from want:

"Yet all might belongs to Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful."(۱)

It is natural that once the affairs of the house are managed by the Owner of the house, He does not leave man to himself and He Himself takes possession of all the affairs of His servant and even becomes his ears, eyes, hands and legs... in this state, the poverty and need of His slave becomes completely obviated and he becomes free from want of both worlds and, of course, in this manifestation of the Haqq his fear of all existents is precluded and dread of Allah, the Exalted, takes its place and the greatness and eminence of the Haqq fills his heart to the brim. Besides the Haqq, he does not perceive anyone as great, eminent and possessor.(۲)

The simplest interpretation that can be put forward for the hadith which says "... I become his ears and his eyes and..." is that Allah performs the duties that the ears, eyes, hands and legs of His slave do. Allah's servants ought to do deeds which settle their material affairs and remedy their needs; but Allah arranges the daily affairs of

His servants in such a way that they become automatically available and everything is put in order such that there is no need to exert pressure on one's mind

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.Surat al-Munafiqun ۶۳:۸ -۱

Imam Khomeini, Fourty hadiths: An Exposition of Ethical and Mystical Traditions, -۲ The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works .(International Affairs Department), ۴th printing ۱۳۷۳ AHS, pp. ۴۴۴-۴۴۵

.about what will have to be done the following day

As soon as one steps out of the house, tasks are fulfilled by the will of Allah, by means of agents which He makes available and perhaps also through other servants of Allah. Individuals need help and Allah makes that aid reach them from the unseen world ['alam al-ghayb]. It is not such that affairs are settled directly from the unseen supernatural world, but that the management of all undertakings and the capacity for all affairs lie in His Hands. Allah arranges agents and means in such a way that all affairs go well without man being in need of anything and without his needing to think .and plan

In order to advance his affairs and duties, a believer does not have need of satanic plans. Once he believes that his short term needs are provided by Allah, he no longer nurtures long-drawn-out aspirations. His task is only to fulfill the responsibilities that .lie on his shoulders

In contrast, if a person is only preoccupied with amassing riches and wealth and the acquisition of more income in order to increase worldly allurements and attractions—changing household decorations as often as possible, buying new cars, etc.—his aspirations will not come to an end because this domain is endless and to quote Imam Khomeini (may Allah be pleased with him), "If he were given the whole of the planet earth, he would not be contented with it and would begin planning how to conquer

”.and subjugate other planets as well

Remembrance of Death and Manifestations of Divine Modesty

With regard to what has previously been alluded to, the Noble Prophet (S) has mentioned three conditions for man to enter paradise: the first condition is that man ought to curtail his aspirations, not attach his heart to the world, not worry about the future and only preoccupy his mind with the hereafter. The second condition is that he ought to remember death all the time. Referring to this condition after the first condition is indicative of the close connection between these two because one ought to think about death constantly if he intends to keep interminable hopes outside the .realm of his thoughts

The reason for this is that when one takes death into consideration, the end and consequences of worldly ambitions and their futility become apparent; therefore, there is a close relationship between wiping out endless hopes and contemplation of .death

Having hopes and aspirations are not entirely voluntary. When man is brought up in circumstances which are governed by a materialistic culture, what he sees and hears have an effect on him and the eyes and ears make him pay heed to the world. .Whether he likes it or not worldly ambitions find their way to his heart

Under the circumstances, what must one do to avoid being attracted by the allurements of the world and to refrain from long-drawn-out hopes? It is in regard to this important issue that the Noble Prophet (S) advises Abu Dharr to persistently contemplate death: if man

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is continually attentive to the fact that the end of this life is death, he comprehends that this world is not a worthy place for him to attach his heart. That which is worthy of love is eternal, never ending and never decreases—and that is the pure life of the .hereafter

If man is consistently preoccupied with the thought of death, he is not afflicted by false expectations, greed and a great deal of other mean qualities. For this reason, the remembrance of death is an effective remedy for curing spiritual diseases. Paying attention to death is very easy: man can create manifestations of death in his surroundings; for example, he can hang a writing or poster about death in his room or at his place of work, or he can put it in the inner folds of a book so that he is reminded about death by seeing it.

In a hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"The most intelligent person is he who meditates upon death more."(1)

Without the least doubt, an intelligent person is not deceived and he chooses the best between the world and the hereafter. Once a clever person conceives that the world is destined to destruction, he does not believe that it is worthwhile. In any case, remembrance of death is an effective remedy for breaking free from love of the world and interminable false hopes.

The third condition for entering the garden of eternal bliss (paradise)—which was referred to in a different way in the previous lesson—is divine

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۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۶, p. ۱۳۰.

modesty. Because the Noble Prophet (S) repeatedly alludes to the need to be decent and modest in the presence of Allah, Abu Dharr understands that the issue of modesty enjoys special status and importance, and that is the reason why the Noble Prophet (S) continues to lay a great deal of emphasis upon it. For this reason a question arises for him about why the Noble Prophet (S) lays so much emphasis on this issue and grants it so much importance. He considers it probable that the Noble Prophet (S) has a special intention in mind, and thus asks:

"O Prophet of Allah, we are all modest before Allah. (What do you mean?)"

Because he does not consider the normal amount of modesty to be sufficient, the :Noble Prophet (S) cites three manifestations of divine modesty

Modesty is not that which it appears to be; rather, modesty before Allah is that you“ ”.must not forget the graves and ruins of former generations

The first manifestation of divine modesty mentioned by the Noble Prophet (S) is that man should not forget graveyards and ancient constructions. Of course, the intention here is not places like decorated cemeteries which do not remind man of the hereafter, but desolate and ruined graves to which little or no attention at all is paid. Previously it was mentioned that the mind of man is limited and when he is .preoccupied with one set of issues he is hindered from paying attention to others

If man wants to produce desirable spiritual

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states like modesty, fear [khawf] and eagerness for Allah, which are considered pre-eminent in the Islamic order and emphasized in ethics, it is necessary to prepare the proper foundation: in order to bring about that level of modesty which has been alluded to in the words of the Noble Prophet (S), a person ought to forgo the allurements of the world and become affectionate towards desolate graveyards and .old ruined buildings

When man’s attention is focused on grand, beautiful and attractive buildings which are being built and if every day his eyes are set upon new decorations and colorful curtains, the attractions of the world manifest themselves more and more in his eyes. If he wants to reduce a bit of this attention to the deceptive manifestations of this world, he must turn his attention to graveyards, the destination of humanity, and the dead lying under the earth. He ought to look at ruined desolate buildings and observe what the end of stones, metal and cement which are laid one on top of the other will .be

It should not be mistakenly understood that what is meant is that we should build our

houses with clay so that they fall whenever it rains. On the contrary, the order of Islam is that man ought to do every act correctly; if he is building a house, he ought to build a strong one. The intention is that man must not give his heart to the allurements and attractions of the world and

must not be deceived by the world. The purport is not that he ought not to perform his .work correctly

Man has a duty to be earnest in his deeds, but not to fall in love with the world. When man sees the attractive beauties of the world, it is natural for his heart to be captivated by them. This state is not volitional: when he sees his neighbor has a car and exchanges it for a more luxurious car, he becomes tempted and asks himself why others should be able to exchange their cars so often while he doesn't even own a !dilapidated car

When he himself does buy a car, the following day he is tempted to buy the newest and latest model. Therefore, the Noble Prophet's (S) advice is that man ought to sometimes visit graves and desolate or ruined places. Ethical scholars, too, counsel their students to go to graves on a daily basis; at the minimum, they ought to visit graves once a week, which is recommended in Islamic law, so that their hearts become cleansed of love for the world and material affections and so that at least a .balance is struck between love of the world and the hereafter

It is not possible that man be infatuated with the world and love of the world cast a shadow over his heart and at the same time feel fear [khawf] of Allah, be an early riser for prayer and shed tears when he hears the

name of Imam al-Husayn ('a). It is natural that the world and love of it would occupy the place of these affairs. A heart that is filled with love of the world no longer has any room for love of Imam al-Husayn ('a) and Her Holiness Fatimah al-Zahra' ('a). Of

course, these Infallibles ('a) are so luminous that when our dead hearts remember them, they leave an effect, but because our hearts are contaminated, their remembrance does not have the necessary effect.

"And that do not forget the stomach and that which is in it."

The second manifestation of divine modesty is that people should be careful about what they eat. If people make use of everything that falls into their hands and are not afraid of eating prohibited [haram] foods, little by little they become afflicted by hardheartedness and their hearts become devoid of divine light. People must be careful not to eat doubtful or forbidden foods which can cause hardness of the heart and from then on they do not find the inclination to worship, fear Allah, desire paradise and encounter the beatific vision [liqa'] of Allah. For this reason, in order to have divine modesty, it is incumbent to pay heed to the stomach and be cautious about the food that is placed into it. The Noble Qur'an advises man to be careful what food he eats:

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الإِنسَانُ إِلَى طَعَامِهِ

"So let man observe his food."(1)

Man has to follow all the aspects of nutrition and examine his food from

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1- Surat 'Abasa ٨٠:٢٤.

all points of view and take care that it is sound, hygienic, lawful [halal] and pure. The Companions of the Cave [ashab al-kahf] who, as the best of Allah's servants, had forsaken the polytheistic order and idol worship and liberated themselves from the trap of atheistic beliefs during the reign of Diqyanus, according to the saying of the Qur'an, used to select the purest and most lawful [halal] of foods. After narrating the events that came to pass for the Companions of the Cave in the grotto and their waking up from sleep after a hundred years and the course of their conversation, the

:Glorious Qur’an states

فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَيُّهَا أَزْكَى طَعَامًا فَلْيَأْتِكُم بِرِزْقٍ مِنْهُ ...

Send one of you to the city with this money. Let him observe which of them has the“ (purest food, and bring you provisions from there.”(۱)

It is in view of the effects of unlawful possessions in misleading man and keeping him aloof from what is right and in propelling him towards sinning against Allah and against the saints [awliya’] of Allah that Imam al-Husayn (‘a) said to the atheistic army :when they did not listen to his words

All of you are sinning and disobeying me and opposing my orders and are not“ listening to my words. Yes, your stomachs are filled with haram food and a seal has (been put over your hearts.”(۲)

Yes, haram food impels a person to be so hard-hearted and cold-hearted that he even becomes ready to pull out a sword against the

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۱- Surat al-Kahf ۱۸:۱۹.

۲- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۴۵, p. ۸.

son of the Noble Prophet (S). It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) believes that modesty is guaranteed by man being careful about what he eats and eating halal .foods

And that he ought to control the head and its parts.” (That is to say, the eyes, the ears“ (.and the tongue

The third manifestation of divine modesty is that man ought to observe the thoughts and ideas he nurtures in his mind and the hopes and dreams that exist therein. If he purifies his imagination, casts null and void thoughts out of his brain and also embarks .upon purifying his inner self, he can attain desirable modesty

Neatness, A Practice of the Saints [Awliya'] of Islam

:In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) states

Any human being who desires nobility and dignity in the hereafter has to give up the“ ornaments of the world. Whenever you have done this, you have attained the station ”.of the friend of Allah

When man has detached his self from the world and has become heedless with regard to it, he falls in love with the hereafter and its unending blessings and yearns to encounter the beatific vision [liqa'] of Allah and he becomes beloved and honorable in the hereafter. In contrast, if the world appears great in the sight of man, the .hereafter appears small from his point of view

Of course, reflecting about the hereafter, death and going to the graves is effective; however, man has to think well also in regard to his conduct. In order not to fall into the trap

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of the world, he ought to rid himself of its ornaments and attractions, in which case he .will become honorable and dignified in the hereafter

It must be stated, however, that some adornments are recommended, so much so that if man pursues them, because of their religious desirability, not only is he not considered to be a seeker of the world but a pursuer of the hereafter. It is religiously desirable and recommended in divine law that a wife should beautify herself for her husband and that the husband ought to do the same for his wife, and it is recommendable for believers in gatherings to wear clean clothes, perfume themselves, brush their teeth, comb their hair and apply oil to their bodies. Believers .must be so clean that people delight in socializing with them

Beyond the shadow of doubt if these affairs are done with the intention of gaining nearness and proximity to Allah, they are considered to be worship and not counted as ornamentation for the world. Ornamentation for the world takes place when a

human being beautifies himself for the sake of carnal desires and in order to derive .pleasure from it and not for the sake of Allah and the hereafter

Man likes to wear stylish and fashionable clothes, to eat delicious and diverse foods, and to have a beautiful and grand house. Such adornment is desirable if it is done for the sake of the hereafter and for conforming to the orders of Allah. The Noble

:Prophet (S) used to consistently clean and perfume himself

The Noble Prophet's (S) habit was such that he used to look at himself in the mirror,“ clean his head and face, and comb his hair and often he did this with water. Besides doing this in front of his family, he used to groom himself in front of his companions too and say, 'Allah loves the servant who cleans and adorns himself when going out of his house to visit his brothers'.”(۱)

A believer ought to be clean and have an orderly outward appearance all the time; he ought not to be disheveled and dirty because this results in other people being disgusted with him. In the past there used to be dirty, soiled carpets in mosques and some people used to enter them with grimy clothes and smelly bodies and, in .contrast, places of moral corruption used to be clean and perfumed

The assemblies of the believers ought to be the best, cleanest and most fragrant places of gathering. We must imitate the way of the Noble Prophet (S) and adopt the .conduct of the Infallible Imams ('a) as our role models

A considerable amount of the Noble Prophet's (S) income used to be spent on buying perfume. We ought to take lessons and know that these ornamentations and adornments are not undesirable, for the reason that they are orders of the divine law and, if they are performed with the intention of gaining nearness to Allah, they are considered to

.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۶, p. ۳۳۰ -۱

be worship. The wisdom underlying these injunctions is that the believers become affectionate towards each other, derive pleasure from one another and get benefit .from the light of each other

Lesson ۲۶: The Role of Pure Supplication and Meritorious Deeds

point

This section of the Noble Prophet's (S) counsels is in connection with supplication of Allah, the need to conform supplication to proper deeds and the invaluable role of a righteous individual in the home and society. Beyond a shadow of doubt supplication or appealing to Allah is one of the manifestations of devotional service and sincere obedience to Allah and in this regard a great deal of the verses of the Gracious Qur'an .and hadiths have been recorded and detailed discussions have been held

The Concept of Supplication

In regard to the meaning of supplication, the late Raghib Isfahani has said, "Supplication is similar to calling out or evocation, with the difference that in calling out sometimes 'O….!' and other terms besides that are used and a name does not accompany it; but supplication is used in circumstances where a name is brought, like 'O so and so!' of course evocation and supplication are sometimes used (interchangeably."(۱

The late 'Allamah Tabataba'i has said, "Supplication by Allah, the Exalted, is of two types: existential [takwini] and institutional [tashri'i] (or revealed divine law)." Existential denotes bringing into being something which Allah has willed, as if that :thing which he has willed is being summoned or called. Allah, the Exalted, states

يَوْمَ يَدْعُوكُمْ فَتَسْتَجِيبُونَ بِحَمْدِهِ وَتَظُنُّونَ إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً

The day He calls you forth, you will"

.Raghib Isfahani, Mufradat, under maddah da‘awa -۱

(respond to Him, praising Him, and you will think that you remained only a little.”(۱

However, institutional supplication of Allah, the Exalted, implies that by means of the verses of the Glorious Qur’an, He charges people with the duty to accept His religion, but the supplication of a slave of Allah denotes that the slave attracts and acquires the mercy and grace of the Lord by means of devotional service and obedience to .Him

It is for this reason that in reality worship is tantamount to supplication because the servant places himself in the station of servitude and connection to his Lord by means of his invocation (with a feeling of dependence on Allah and a feeling of lowliness and humility) so that he may attract Allah’s attention to himself because of His Sovereignty and Lordship, and this is what supplication means. The word of Allah :alludes to this same meaning

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمُ ادْعُونِی أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِی سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ

And Your Lord says: Call Me, and I will answer you! Indeed those who are disdainful“ (of My worship will enter hell in utter humility.”(۲

In this verse Allah has first used the expression ‘Call Me’ (which is equivalent to .’supplicate or invoke Me) and then after that He has employed the term ‘worship

It ought not be mistakenly understood that the meaning of hearing and responding to the supplication of the invoker is that whatever he asks for at whatever time will be granted to him. Such an interpretation

.Surat al-Isra’ ۱۷:۵۲ -۱
.Surat al-Mu’min (or Ghafir) ۴۰:۶۰ -۲

of the acceptance and granting of supplication is not compatible with religious

explanations. All too often what the invoker supplicates for is not in his good interests and granting his request harms him, because he is not aware of what is expedient for .him

:In his will to his son, Imam 'Ali ('a) states

Then he has placed the keys of His treasures in your hands in the sense that He has" shown you the way to ask Him. Therefore, whenever you wish, open the doors of His favor with prayer and let the abundant rains of His mercy fall on you. Delay in acceptance of the prayer should not disappoint you because the granting of prayer is according to the measure of your intention. Sometimes acceptance of prayer is delayed with a view to its being a source of greater reward to the asker and of better .gifts to the expectant

Sometimes, you ask for a thing but it is not given to you, and a better thing is given to you later or a thing is taken away from you for some greater good because sometimes you ask for a thing which contains ruin for your religion if were to be given to you. Therefore, your request should be for things whose beauty should be lasting and whose burden should remain far from you. As for wealth, it will not last for you (and may bring harm to you in life and in the hereafter."(١

Differences among People in Supplication and Requests

In regard to man's incentive in

.Nahj al-Balaghah, pp. ٩٢۴-٩٢۵, letter no. ٣١, trans. Fayd al-Islam -١

supplication and why so much emphasis has been laid on invocation of Allah, it ought to be said in brief that the path towards man's perfection is devotional service to Allah and one of the manifestations of servitude to Allah is that man ought to present his .needs only to Allah and ask Him only to grant them

The truth is that people are different in regard to their levels of devotion and their

stations of service to Allah, and their needs too are varied: the needs of those who are at the lower levels of knowledge and faith and are at the beginning of the path towards perfection are materialistic. When they request a thing from Allah, their needs are worldly—they request more sustenance, healthy children, a good wife, a grand house, provision of the needs of life and other things of this nature.

Of course, for a human being that is at the lower levels of faith and has not attained the higher levels of divine knowledge, it is very proper that he request these same material needs from Allah instead of asking for higher needs. In reality his requests from Allah are indicative of the fact that he has faith in Allah and believes that Allah is able to grant him his needs.

It is for this reason that he extends his begging hand to Allah and not to human beings. It is natural that if he requests these very needs from Allah, He will grant his needs

because Allah Himself told Prophet Moses ('a):

"O Moses! Ask for all your needs from Me, even the fodder for your sheep and the salt for your bread dough." (1)

Man's perfection lies in the fact that in order to secure needs, whether material or spiritual, he ought only to ask from Allah and from no one other than Him and not believe in the effectiveness of any other save Allah; otherwise, if one requests from any other save Allah, Allah will render him hopeless. Imam al-Sadiq ('a) says:

"Allah, the Exalted, states, 'I swear upon My honor, glory, greatness and the dignity of the Throne that I render futile and unachievable the hope of anyone who puts their faith in anyone save Me and I make him wear the dress of disgrace among the people and keep him far from My proximity and My graces. He puts his hope in other than Me when he is in difficulty, in spite of the fact that I am the One who sends problems, and he puts his faith in all else other than Me, and in his imagination he knocks on the door

of everyone save My door regardless of the fact that the keys to all the closed doors are in My possession and the door of My house is open to any person who calls upon Me'."(۲)

Unfortunately, a lot of our supplications and invocations are not real, that is to say we do not ask Allah in spite of the fact that the

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۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۹۳, p. ۳۰۳.
۲- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۱۰۷.

real effecter is Allah and it is proper that man ought to only present his requests to Him.

However, when man has a need, he goes to see a person who will solve his problem. If he wants money, he extends his hand to someone who will give him money and/or he goes to look for a job from which he can earn an income, but a true believer initially sets his heart on Allah and presents his request to Him and then takes recourse to other human beings as a result of duty and because Allah has made worldly agents a means of attaining our needs and not because we are independent and self-sufficient.

In any case, man's perfection, faith and awareness of Allah are increased to the extent that man's heart is attentive to Allah and asks the Divine Essence to remedy his needs. We cannot fathom the invaluable alchemy and precious elixir that being attentive to Allah is and how effective asking for material and worldly needs from Allah is on the perfection of man's soul.

The late 'Allamah Tabataba'i used to narrate that his instructor the late Ayatullah Mirza 'Ali Aqa Qadi used to say, "Sometimes man is heedless of Allah and Allah afflicts that servant for some time with hardships and encumbrances in order to compel him to say one 'Ya Allah (O my Allah!)' because this 'Ya Allah' is very effective on man's soul and gives fruit to the illumination of the soul."

With regard to

p: ۳۰

what has been said, it becomes clear how effective paying attention to Allah is in illuminating the heart and in elevating man's soul and how much it can aid him in progressing and advancing towards perfection even in circumstances where he does .not feel a great need

Of course, man does not comprehend this fact and he ought not to comprehend completely because this cosmos is a place of examination and if the effects of everything completely manifested themselves in this world, the examination would not take place as is befitting. Some things should remain hidden in order for the test to .be administered in the best possible form

For this reason man must never forget Allah and he ought to request everything, including his material needs, from Him. Man must know that his supplication—even for material needs—and his attention to Allah is tantamount to acknowledgement of his servitude and recognition of the Lordship of Allah and this attention in asking one's .needs from Allah is effective for the perfection of the soul

It will be that much greater if one's awareness grows and faith increases and a person supplicates for spiritual needs in addition to material affairs and he invokes Allah to grant him the grace to perform acts of worship, the opportunity to acquire knowledge, the ability to serve mankind and the power to abstain from sin. Above and beyond this, is supplication for others including friends, neighbors, classmates, ,believers and every person who has a right upon us

p: ۳۱

.such as teachers

Higher than this group are human beings who are so preoccupied by praising and adoring Allah, the Exalted, at the time of supplication that they are prevented them from asking for their own needs. When they want to supplicate for their needs, they

remember the divine attributes of His glory and beauty and engage in praising and adoring their Lord and do not become satiated no matter how much they praise Allah. It is for this reason that there remains no opportunity for them to request anything for themselves. A man who is in love, whose eyes are fixed on his beloved and is absorbed in the beauty of his darling does not see himself so as to ask for anything for .himself

People who have attained this level of knowledge still feel that Allah, the Exalted, wants the effects of servitude and devotional obedience to manifest themselves in all their limbs and members and in all the aspects of their being, just as one of the effects of devotional service and obedience to Allah is that man ought to place his forehead on clay as a sign of humility and submission in the presence of Allah. Other effects of devotional servitude include tears of enthusiasm for the glory of Allah, tears due to fear of the greatness of Allah that flow from the eyes, and the trembling of the heart; in the same way, in addition to the rest of the limbs and members of the body, the

p: ٣٢

effects of humility must be manifested on the tongue and one of the effects of obedience and devotional servitude to Allah is that a slave ought to request a thing .from his Lord

The Importance of Manifesting Indigence and Incapacity in the Presence of Allah

When man perceives that Allah, the Exalted, wants him to manifest his servitude with all his being and all his physical and inner powers, he ought to know that he must show his incapacity and humility by means of his tongue and present his request to Allah and that this begging and asking is a sign of lowliness in the presence of the .Lord

Those who have tasted the sweetness of this neediness towards Allah know what glory and honor it brings to hand. Indeed, those who have attained the highest levels of gnosticism and awareness still feel that they must invoke Allah in supplication and make the effects of servitude flow on their tongues, this manifestation of servitude is

.worship and it is relevant

Allah wants man to manifest poverty and indigence in His presence and it is natural that once all the limbs and members of man are consistently conformed in the course of devotional service to Allah and in discharging commendable deeds—for example through supplication to Allah by means of the tongue—man will attain desirable results because all his limbs and powers are consistent with one another. When he supplicates, it is as though he is requesting and asking the Divine Presence with all his being and it is natural that the expansive mercy of Allah

p: ٣٣

:has encompassed him

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِی عَنِّی فَإِنِّی قَرِیبٌ أُجِیبُ دَعْوَهَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ...

And when my servants ask you about Me, [tell them that] I am indeed near. I answer" (the supplicant's call when he calls Me..."(١

In supplication man asks for something from Allah and He too grants it to the human being, but for the person who has tasted the love of Allah and the enjoyment of prayer as intimate dialogue with his Lord, the greatest pleasure is that when he says .'('Ya Allah (O my Allah)', in response to him it is said 'Labbayk (Here I am

However, when a person's heart is directed towards Allah alone and he is not attentive to anyone else, Allah grants him when he requests. A human being ought to ask for all his needs from Allah; he must ask for his bread from Allah when he is hungry and show poverty and indigence to the Absolute Self-sufficient with all his :being, and like Prophet Moses ('a), say

... رَبِّ إِنِّی لِمَا أَنزَلْتَ إِلَیَّ مِنْ خَیْرٍ فَقِیرٌ

(O my Lord! I am indeed in need of any good You may send down to me."(٢..."

Prophet Moses ('a) said this after fleeing from Egypt and heading towards Midian when he had no food and no house to sleep in. At night he slept on the ground in the

:desert and ate herbage due to intense hunger. As Imam 'Ali ('a) states

(If you want, I will, as a second example, relate to you concerning Moses ('a"

.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۸۶ -۱
.Surat al-Qasas ۲۸:۲۴ -۲

the Interlocutor of Allah, when he said, 'O my Lord! I need whatever good You may grant me.' (Qur'an ۲۸:۲۴) By Allah, he asked Him only for bread to eat because he had nothing to eat save the herbs of the earth, and the greenness of the herbs could be seen from the delicate skin of his belly due to his thinness and the paucity of his (flesh."(۱)

Moses ('a) found his way to Midian after escaping from Egypt. One day he saw a group of people busy drawing water from a well and two girls by the side waiting for the men to finish drawing water and go aside so as to find the opportunity to draw water for their sheep. Moses ('a) approached those two girls and asked, "Why have you come here?" When he heard why they were there, he felt pity for them as a result .of which he drew water for them and satiated their goats

Thereafter, the two girls went away without giving him anything. After a while, one of the two girls returned and said, "My father wants you to go to him so that he may compensate you for helping us." When Moses ('a) went to Shu'ayb (Jethro), the father of the girls, Shu'ayb married one of his daughters to Moses ('a) and thereafter .(material life, wife and children, ease and peace were secured for Moses ('a

Yes, if a person asks for something from the deepest recesses of his heart from Allah, He

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۵۰۷, sermon [khutbah] ۱۵۹, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

bestows upon him. It is not necessary for a person to recite long and detailed supplications and spend much time on supplication—it is enough for him to request his needs with his entire being from Allah so that He may grant his invocation. However, when a person recites supplications, even long and detailed supplications, and his heart is fixed on other than Allah, his invocations are not effective. If, in addition to preparedness of the heart, man has commendable deeds, his supplications are .granted even faster

The Need to Conform Supplication to Commendable Deeds

Perhaps the reason why the supplication of people who commit indecent deeds is not granted and why they are not successful in their requests from Allah is that they do not have complete attention to Allah. This is because improper deeds cause one to fall in love with other than Allah and perhaps also become fond of something that is hated by Allah. In this case, how is it possible for such a person to turn to Allah? People who acquire pure and complete attention to Allah are those whose deeds are decent and :proper and far from corruption. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Supplication accompanied by good and proper deeds is enough to the“ ”.extent that salt is necessary for food

In the same way that for food a specific amount of salt is necessary and there is no need for extra, supplication too is enough to that same measure for a person who has good and

p: ۳۶

proper deeds. In reality invocation is the spice of life of a person who seeks .prosperity

For this reason, it is not necessary for such a person to supplicate and present his requests to Allah constantly and when that person makes a request, Allah responds to it. For those who do not have commendable deeds and do not help other people, it is not clear whether invocation is beneficial to them even if they supplicate a lot; in order :to make this issue more clear, the Noble Prophet (S) said

O Abu Dharr! The similitude of a person who supplicates much without performing“ ”.good deeds is like that of a person who shoots an arrow without a bow

A person who invokes Allah a lot but does not perform his duties correctly is aware of the value of supplication and is truthful in his entreaty and truly has a request from Allah, but he does not act upon his duties in regard to other matters and the effects of devotional service do not become manifested in his personal conduct. He is negligent in connection with his eyes and ears and the other limbs of his body and in reality he is .obedient to the carnal soul and the devil

Such a person, however, ought not to be devoid of hope in Allah, for Allah is more benevolent than to drive a person who comes to knock on His door away without any response. Nevertheless, the condition of such an individual is very

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different from that of a person whose entire conduct and deeds show the effects and manifestations of devotional service to Allah and who traverses the path of servitude to his Lord with all his being and is not negligent even for one moment in regard to .discharging his duties and serving mankind and the Creator

The similitude between the supplication and request of these two individuals is that of two people who want to hit a target with an arrow but when one wants to throw his arrow he does so with his bare hands. The distance it will cover will be much less and it will not hit the target as is intended. However, the other puts his arrow in the bowstring and then shoots and it covers a longer distance and hits the target. The example of a person who supplicates but does not perform good deeds is like that of a person who throws his arrow without a bow. Without any doubt the distance covered .by his arrow will be much less

From what has been said, the status and role of supplication in the life of man has become clear and it has become apparent that invocation of Allah is like salt which is added to food. The life of man ought to be filled with devotional service and worship of Allah whether in relation to personal and individual matters, in connection with his

.household, neighbors and in relation with the society and the creatures of Allah

The

effects of devotional service to Allah have to become manifest in the conduct and deeds of man. In the meanwhile, he also ought to invoke Allah for the reason that this very supplication is an effect of servitude to Allah which manifests itself on the tongue (and without the least doubt requesting and attention ought to arise from the deepest .(recesses of the heart

The other point that has become clear from the explanation of the Noble Prophet (S) is that man through good and decent deeds attains his goals very quickly and, when he invokes Allah, he is like that person who shoots the arrow by means of the bow and his arrow reaches its target very quickly. He is like a person whose food is ready and only needs to add a specified amount of salt to it in order for it to be ready for eating. .For this reason good and commendable deeds help man attain his desires

Of course, the desires of human beings are different. The people who have attained the highest levels of devotional service to Allah have sublime requests: their requests include the desire to gain proximity to Allah, to be free of want of other human beings, attain the prosperity of this world and the bliss of the hereafter and also to have the perpetuity of the blessings which Allah has granted to them. They realize that only Allah grants them their needs and not anyone else. On the other hand, people who are

at the lower levels of servitude and awareness of Allah are preoccupied with thinking about their stomachs, clothes, houses and other needs and their requests are .connected to themselves alone and of course Allah grants them their needs

In reality, the Noble Prophet's (S) words are an encouragement for man to embark upon edification of the soul and discharging of duties in which case a person attains

his goals faster and Allah accepts and grants one's requests. It does not make any difference whether his supplication is in connection with himself or other human beings and whether it is in relation to worldly desires or spiritual and heavenly affairs. Therefore, the Noble Prophet (S) encourages people to perform good deeds although the real effects and rewards for our decent deeds become apparent in the hereafter and this world is primarily a place of work and the reward for deeds will be granted to man in the hereafter:

"Today is the day of action and there is no reckoning while tomorrow is the day of reckoning but there will be no opportunity for action."(1)

It has been recorded in another hadith that:

"Whatsoever a man soweth in the world, that shall he also reap in the hereafter."(2)

Here seeds are sown and in the hereafter the produce is collected, but Allah, the Exalted, as a result of His infinite mercy grants some of the effects and produce of the deeds of righteous people right here in this world so as to encourage them to perform more

1- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۴۰, sermon [khutbah] ۴۲, trans. Shahidi.
2- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۰, p. ۲۲۵.

good deeds and to embark upon performance of duties. Even if there are people who have attained high levels of perfection and they do not require such encouragement and their certitude [in Allah] does not increase by seeing more of these effects:

"If the curtains were pulled aside, my certainty could not be intensified…"(1)

There are those for whom all the veils have not been removed, and they need encouragement to embark upon devotional service to Allah and to traverse the course of perfection. One means of motivation is that Allah grants rewards and blessings for good deeds right in this world and grants prayers:

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَى آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِنَ السَّمَاء وَالأَرْضِ …

And if the people of the towns had been faithful and pious, We would have opened to“ (them blessings from the heaven and the earth.”(٢

The Existential Blessings of the Righteous and Upright

More significant than what has been said so far, in the following sentences the Noble Prophet (S) mentions the rewards for good and virtuous deeds—rewards which are beyond imagination such that man does not have any expectation that his good deeds :could have such befitting benefits

O Abu Dharr! Because of the righteousness of an individual, Allah rectifies and“ improves the state of his children, his grandchildren and his great grandchildren and ”.protects those dwelling in his house and in his neighborhood for as long as he is alive

Allah protects from dangers people who are His devoted servants in this world and, as a result of their blessed existence, He protects their

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۴۰, p ۱۵۳ -۱

.Surat al-A‘raf ۷:۹۶ -۲

children generation after generation, and even the people living in the neighborhood and cities of righteous and upright people are protected from calamities, too. In the same manner, the existential rays of their spiritual blessings and divine graces .encompass their companions and other people living in their vicinity

The existential rays of believers are not the same; some people are only in contact with their wife and children, others are in touch with their neighbors and workmates too and, beyond that, some people are in contact with the people of one city and even .the people of their country

We all know that the late Imam Khomeini (may Allah be pleased with him) had a bond

not only with the people of Iran but with all the Muslims of the world and more than that, with all the oppressed people of the earth. His existential rays had gone beyond one city and one country and had encompassed the whole world. Allah the Exalted, by means of that able and chosen man included millions of people in His grace.

Indeed, not only does Allah, the Exalted, protect a righteous and virtuous person, grant him graces, consent to his supplication and repel calamities from him, but the blessings and graces that are granted to him also include other human beings, such as his family, neighbors and countrymen and calamities too are repelled from these people in gratitude for his invaluable existence.

This precious role and the commendable effects of being a righteous servant

p: ۴۲

of Allah make one aware of the importance of the precious alchemy of setting foot on the course of Allah and following His orders, for its effects even go beyond the realm of man's existence and include other people. Is it not possible that instead of engaging in deeds for which one has hope of benefit but it is not clear that the desired result will be derived and instead of bearing the many hardships of the world in the hope of bringing to hand favorable results, one could spend the moments of his life performing duties and carrying out the orders of Allah so as to secure both worldly and heavenly desires, and so divine graces include both his being and that of his wife, children, and future generations and even neighbors and the people of one's city and country?

What acts could be more profitable and advantageous than these? Do all the people who do business and trade attain all their worldly desires? Sometimes they make profit and sometimes losses. Besides, what do they gain once they succeed at business? The utmost gain they make is that they live comfortably for a short time in this world.

As has been said, sometimes the supplication of one righteous man protects all the people of one city from calamities and causes the downpour of divine grace upon the

people. Beyond the shadow of a doubt in gratitude for the existence of the saints [awliya’] of Allah and righteous people, a great deal

p: ۴۳

of calamities are repelled from us and as a result of their supplications many graces are granted to us and all too often we do not perceive those graces.

Many times our fathers performed good deeds as a result of which Allah still grants us blessings up to now. Often our teachers and great mentors pray for us, or our neighbors and the believers pray for us in the midst of the night and, as a result of their supplications, Allah grants us graces and repels calamities from us. We do not know where these blessings come from and by means of which people these calamities are warded off.

Do we know what blessings derive from the supplications made in the midst of the night by a righteous human being to the divine presence of Allah? It has been stated in the Qur’an and also recorded in hadiths that Allah grants blessings to other people and wards off calamities from them as a result of the presence of virtuous human beings.

In regard to a hadith which Yunus ibn Zabyan narrates from Imam al-Sadiq, (‘a) which will be discussed later, we can cite evidence in the Qur’an:

... وَلَوْ لاَ دَفْعُ اللّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ الأَرْضُ وَلَكِنَّ اللّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

“Were it not for Allah’s repelling the people by means of one another, the earth would surely have been corrupted, but Allah is gracious to the world’s creatures.”(۱)

In the hadith stated by Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) which is related about

p: ۴۴

۱- Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۵۱.

the above-mentioned verse, it has been recorded as follows:

Allah, the Exalted, wards off calamities from that Shi‘ah who does not perform the“ ritual prayers in gratitude for our Shi‘ahs who do perform the ritual prayers, and if all of them do not pray, they will all be destroyed. Allah, the Exalted, wards off adversities from that Shi‘ah who does not fast in gratitude for the Shi‘ah who fasts and if all of them unanimously agreed not to fast, they would be ruined. Allah, the Exalted, wards off afflictions from the Shi‘ahs in gratitude for that Shi‘ah who pays the charity tax and .all of them will be destroyed if they concur not to pay the charity tax

Allah, the Exalted, wards off ordeals from that Shi‘ah who does not go on the hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) in gratitude for that Shi‘ah who goes on the hajj and if all of them agreed not to go on the pilgrimage, they would be ruined. This is the purport of the word of Allah in which He states, ‘Were it not for Allah’s repelling the people by means of one another, the earth would surely have been corrupted, but Allah is gracious to the world’s creatures.’ I swear by Allah that this verse was not revealed (save regarding you and no one was intended except you (the Shi‘ahs).”(١

In regard to the role of the righteous in the society, the blessings which are granted to people in gratitude for the virtuous, and the afflictions

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.Tafsir ‘Ayyashi, vol. ١, p. ١٣۵ -١

which Allah wards off from other human beings on account of them, it must be borne in mind that the best of people and the Prophets (‘a), is the Last Prophet Muhammad ibn ‘Abd Allah (S), who is the possessor of the first and the last knowledge and in whom all the exalted human attributes and all the eminent spiritual perfections are assembled, and the Pure and Infallible Imams (‘a) are likewise; additionally, he is infallible and far from any kind of error and sin, and is the fountainhead and spring of :all the divine graces; just as the Divine Essence has stated

I swear upon my glory and honor that if it were not for you, I would not have ... “ (created the universe.”(١

In addition to the Noble Prophet (S), the divine presence of the Pure and Infallible Imams ('a) has been the reason Allah has preserved the cosmos and grants His blessings and graces to His creatures all the time and wards off a great deal of calamities due to the presence of the Divine Proof, Imam al-Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance). The world would be annihilated if it were devoid of the Divine Proof :even for a single moment, as Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states

We are the leaders of the Muslims and the proofs of Allah upon the dwellers of the" universe… and the earth would crumble and become obliterated if it were void of our presence." After that the Imam ('a) stated, "The world has never been

p: ۴۶

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱۵, p. ۲۷, hadith ۴۸ -۱

void of the proof of Allah since Adam was created and the divine proof was either apparent and known or was absent and unknown by the others and until the Day of Resurrection the world will not remain devoid of the proof of Allah and if it were not like this Allah would not be worshipped (that is to say no man would remain alive so as to worship Allah)." The narrator of the hadith asked, "How can people derive benefit from the hidden proof of Allah?" The Imam stated, "In the same way that they derive (benefit from the sun hidden behind the clouds."(۱

Lesson ۲۷: The Status of a Sincere Servant in the Sight of Allah

point

The theme of this part of the Noble Prophet's (S) counsels is that Allah, the Exalted, takes pride in and praises three types of His servants above the angels. The meaning of Allah's pride and how He venerates His servants above the angels is not exactly clear to us. What can be gathered from this section of the hadith is that the rank of three groups of Allah's servants is higher than the angels and Allah venerates these .groups on account of their superior and high status

Basis of Man's Superiority and Pre-eminence

There is no doubt that among all his creatures, Allah, the Exalted, has made man enjoy certain distinctions and characteristics which are not to be found in other creatures. Among material creatures, He has made man enjoy the blessings of the intellect, reason and awareness, to the extent that he has been granted charismatic and miraculous powers

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.Ibid., vol. ۲۳, p. ۵ -۱

:to subdue the dry lands and seas

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِى آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِى الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُم مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلاً

Certainly We have honored the Children of Adam, and carried them over the land and" sea, and provided them with all the good things, and given them advantage over (many of those We have created with a complete preference."(۱

Furthermore, Allah created man having free will and self-determination such that he chooses the path of his prosperity or affliction of his own volition. Man enjoys the benefits of a divine natural disposition by means of which he is inclined towards all good values, merits and virtues and He has also shown him the way towards .prosperity

However, neither does that existential dignity bring about man's superiority over the angels nor his volition, because it is possible that instead of choosing the course of merit and prosperity, man may select the way of disobedience and wretchedness and deviate from the right course, fall into misguidance and become the lowest of :creatures

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللّهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَهُمْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ

Indeed the worst of beasts in Allah's sight are those who are faithless, so they will" (not believe."(۲

That which causes the status of man to rise higher than that of the angels and brings about his superiority is carrying out the orders of Allah and making effort to traverse the course of perfection by traveling the path of spirituality and eventually attaining perfection. That is, on the basis of

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.Surat al-Isra' ۱۷:۷۰ -۱

.Surat al-Anfal ۸:۵۵ -۲

his divine inclination, the human being must pursue the path of prosperity and trample .his carnal desires underfoot and moderate his materialistic instincts

When man, who has animalistic and materialistic inner faculties which incessantly pull him towards attention to material and animalistic gratifications, controls his animal faculties, selects what is right and acts on the basis of his divine predisposition when confronted with the choice between right and wrong, he becomes adored by the angels and his rank becomes higher than their status. It is for this reason that in this :section of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Your Lord boasts on account of three individuals over the angels; the" first person that Allah praises over the angels is a man who recites the adhan(۱) and the iqamah(۲) in the midst of the desert and performs his ritual prayers. Allah tells his angels, 'Look at my servant maintaining the prayers regardless of the fact that no human being sees him.' Then, seventy thousand angels descend and act in ".accordance with him and seek forgiveness for him until the following day

This is a man who recites the adhan and iqamah in a dry desert devoid of herbage and far from the sight of people and thereafter performs the prayers and does not consider that, because no one sees, it suffices to recite the obligatory prayers and there is no need to recite the adhan and iqamah for the reason that no one is there to listen. Due

.The call to prayer -۱
.The second call to prayer made just before beginning the prayer -۲

to obedience and his station of servitude, he performs his prayers with all its formalities and norms and it is for this reason that Allah venerates him over the angels and seventy thousand angels descend and recite their prayers behind him and .seek forgiveness for him

:The second person on account of whom Allah boasts over the angels

And [Allah boasts on account of] a person who wakes up from sleep at night to pray" and prostrate before Allah and then falls into sleep while in the state of prostration. Allah states, 'O angels! Look at my servant whose soul is in my presence and whose ".'body is in prostration

In regard to a man who wakes in the middle of the night from a comfortable, warm bed and from sweet sleep to embark upon worship and invocation of his Lord and is so immersed in supplication of his Object of Worship that he does not raise his head from the place of prostration to the extent that he falls asleep while in that state, Allah tells the angels, "Look at my servant who has arisen from his restful bed in the middle of the night and embarked upon my invocation and worship far from the eyes of other people. He lengthens his worship so much that he becomes tired and falls asleep while in a state of prostration. His soul is in my presence while his body is in prostration." Allah, the Exalted, states that the soul of the man in prostration

p: ۵۰

is in His presence because man's soul during sleep returns to Allah and this is a point :which has been hinted at in the Qur'an

اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الأَنفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِى لَمْ تَمُتْ فِى مَنَامِهَا فَيُمْسِکُ الَّتِى قَضَى عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الأُخْرَى إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى...

Allah takes the souls at their death, and those who have not died in their sleep. Then" He retains those for whom He has ordained death and releases the others until a

(specified time…"(1)

From the viewpoint of the Glorious Qur'an a true believer is a person who wakes up in the middle of the night and forbids himself from sleeping:

تَتَجَافَى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا...

"Their sides vacate their beds(2) to supplicate their Lord in fear and hope…"(3)

Yes, maintaining the night prayers far from the eyes of other human beings and performing long prostrations and bowing down for Allah, the Exalted, causes Allah, the Exalted, to boast on one's behalf.

The third person that Allah praises over the angels is as follows:

"And [Allah boasts on account of] a man in the battlefield who is deserted by his companions but remains steadfast in fighting until he is killed."

Allah, the Exalted, boasts on account of the fighting champion who stands alone on the battlefield contending with the enemy until the last breath of his life after his companions have fled the battleground in defeat because they lacked the power of resistance. Although he could have taken flight like the rest of his friends and saved his own

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۱- Surat al-Zumar ۳۹:۴۲.

۲- That is, they abandon their beds at night and forgo the pleasure of sleep to worship their Lord in a state of fear and hope. [Footnote of 'Ali Quli Qara'i's translation of the Qur'an]

۳- Surat al-Sajdah ۳۲:۱۶.

life, he preferred to be martyred in the way of Allah, the Exalted. Yes, Allah boasts on account of a man who stands up against a multitude of enemies and resists regardless of the fact that in such circumstances resistance is not incumbent. During

the early days of Islam, it was initially incumbent for one Muslim to resist against ten people and later on a concession was offered and it became obligatory for one Muslim to resist two people, but if everyone took flight and no one remained on the battleground, it was no longer binding for that one fighter to remain.

There is not the least doubt that fleeing from the battlefield while it was possible to resist the enemy is a great sin and the Glorious Qur'an explicitly forbids running away from war. This action is hated by Allah and the abode of a deserter from the battlefield is believed to be the infernal fire:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا زَحْفاً فَلاَ تُوَلُّوهُمُ الأَدْبَارَ * وَمَنْ يُوَلِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ دُبُرَهُ إِلاَّ مُتَحَرِّفاً لِقِتَالٍ أَوْ مُتَحَيِّزاً إِلَى فِئَةٍ فَقَدْ بَاء بِغَضَبٍ مِنَ اللّهِ وَمَأْوَاهُ جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ

"O you who have faith! When you encounter the faithless [for battle], do not turn your backs [to flee] from them. Whoever turns his back [to flee] from them that day—unless [he is] diverting to fight or retiring towards another troop—shall certainly earn Allah's wrath and his abode is hell; and an evil destination shall it be."(1)

A great deal of lessons can

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1- Surat al-Anfal 8:15-16.

be learnt from this part of the hadith: the purport of Allah's boasting over the angels on account of some of His servants is due to their possessing values which are very invaluable in the viewpoint of Allah and if there were other characteristics which bring about more perfection for mankind and draw man to closer proximity with Allah, He would have mentioned them. When He wants to make known to the angels the high rank of some of Hs servants and to take pride in them, He in truth makes known the best of their values.

Now, we ought to see what common characteristics and qualities these three types of Allah's servants possess—the one who maintains his prayers with all its norms and

recommendations in the wilderness far from the eyes of other human beings, that man who wakes up from his comfortable bed and embarks upon worship and supplication of Allah, and also the person who stands alone against a multitude of enemies and resists to the last breath of his life so as to be granted this extent of .superiority and high rank by Allah

Without the least doubt characteristics such as spending wealth in the way of Allah, freely giving what is needed for the pleasure of Allah, performing acts of worship, and other good works which the divine revealed law has recommended are all valuable and bring about perfection in man, but we ought to observe what characteristics these three groups of human beings have and

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what common elements exist among them that cause them to be so highly .emphasized

The common characteristic and element among these three groups of people is aloneness; the first person worships Allah far from the eyes of other human beings and the second one wakes up from sleep alone in the middle of the night to invoke .Allah and the third person stands alone in the battlefield in front of the enemy

Allah does not take pride in the prayer which a person maintains in the local or Friday mosque but instead takes pride in the prayer of a person who maintains prayer alone in the wilderness and the man who stands up to the enemy alone regardless of the fact that all his companions have taken flight from the battleground. It is likely that an individual might have taken part in many battles and skirmishes and have a great deal of courage and bravery and might have also produced victories and glory, but still despite all this emphasis is laid on a person who has remained alone and even so .continues to discharge his duty

The Role of Independence and Sincerity of Intention

a) Independence

Two important factors called independence or liberty (being free from the influence of other people) and sincerity have brought about the lofty values for the undertakings .of these three types of individuals in solitude

In explanation of the first factor, that is to say independence, it must be said that by and large people submit to the influence and conduct of other people. One of the characteristics

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of man is that once he perceives a group of people proceeding along a certain course and following a particular type of behavior, he as well drifts in that direction and becomes inclined to that habit. It seems as though the movement and tendency of other people is a factor which helps man to choose his course of direction and progression. Once he observes a group of people making strides along the path of .good and wellbeing, he also follows suit

Of course, this is a sign of man’s weakness and Allah has put this factor in man’s nature so that those who are weak may traverse the right path by following righteous people. Unfortunately, these people also fall under the influence of bad elements and all too often being attached to other human beings becomes a cause for them to proceed on the path of falsehood. As a result of imitating other people they change their colors and in order not to be disgraced or stigmatized, they acquire the same .habits that are prevalent in the society

Allah, the Exalted, in condemnation of these people of weak determination who pander to every whim of their associates without thinking, reflecting and observing the consequences of blindly following the people of vanity and falsehood and those :who entrust the reins of their free will to others, states

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لاَ يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئاً وَلاَ يَهْتَدُونَ

And when they are“

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told, 'Follow what Allah has sent down,' They say, 'We rather follow what we found our fathers following.' What, even if their fathers neither applied reason nor were (guided?!"(١

Of course, in connection with the laws of Allah and divine duties, a person without knowledge is obliged to ask religious scholars whenever he is ignorant about an injunction of Allah or the concept of an injunction. This means that he ought to follow and bind himself to the opinions and religious-judicial decrees of a Muslim jurist .[[mujtahid

However, an individual who becomes acquainted with the laws of Allah by means of following the decrees of a Muslim jurist is not equal with one who independently and personally strives to deduce and infer the laws of Allah from their sources because the knowledge of the Muslim jurist and independent scholar is not the same as the awareness which the imitator acquires by means of following the decrees of the .jurist. Without the least doubt independent knowledge is superior

Likewise, in connection with concepts, especially social concepts, the majority of people do not have sufficient awareness and they are impelled to follow individuals who have knowledge of those subjects. This following and submission is not blameworthy and reproachable if it does not go off the right path, but the person who is learned and, by means of the lamp which he carries, guides and leads other human .beings occupies a superior status and position

Beyond the stage of independent knowledge, and more important, is the

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.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۷۰ -۱

stage of decision making and action. Sometimes, man knows a concept either by means of independent reason or by following the opinion of a religious jurist [mujtahid], but there is no certainty that he will act according to what he knows. Indeed, when one is in a group, especially if that group is a large crowd, he takes

.action; but he is lazy when alone

Every person has a great deal of examples for this instance in his own personal life; for example, a religious student who lives in a seminary where the Supplication of Kumayl [Du'a' al-Kumayl] is recited on Thursday nights is encouraged to attend the supplication recitals when he sees other seminarians attending the sessions in great numbers, but it is very hard for him to recite the Supplication of Kumayl on a Thursday .night alone when everyone else in the seminary has gone out

In the same way in regard to performing other good works, man is encouraged to do praiseworthy deeds when he sees other people doing the same but, once alone, he raises pretexts for himself and there is no inclination as such in his inner being to impel him to make a decision. In any case, he finds every possible excuse to put off .doing that job

Or, once he sees that lights are on late at night in the rooms of other students and everyone is busy studying, the eagerness to study arises in him and he too studies for hours on end but

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when it is time for holidays and there is no one in school except himself, there is no longer that inner pull within and he does not have the desire at all, either. That which has been mentioned were only examples and there are a great number of other .examples to be found in our social and political conduct

The factor for this sluggishness and dependence on others is weakness of resolution and faith. Does a deed acquire value when done by others? Does it lose its value when not done by others? If the Supplication of Kumayl has value, we ought to strive to .recite it in privacy and solitude as well, not only when a public session is organized

It is a sign of weakness in man to become motivated to only recite the Supplication of Kumayl when he sees other people doing so or only to go to the mosque for Friday prayers when he sees others doing the same. This is not a thing to take pride in. The

cause of pride for a person is worship in private when no one sees what we distinguish as a duty—not expecting other human beings to accompany us as we .worship

When I know that Allah wants me to perform a specific deed, I must endeavor to discharge that duty and I must not be concerned about whether others go along with me or not because the lack of support from other people does not reduce the value of that

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deed in the least. It is in this very case that man enjoys the benefits of a strong will .and accepts his duties with strong and superior faith

Therefore, he independently makes the decision to perform works whether he is accompanied by other people or not. Without the least doubt, independence in regard to decision making is very valuable; once it is time to make a decision, an individual must not wait to see what way others choose so that he too may take the same course. He who has a strong will and faith fulfills his duty once he distinguishes it as .pleasing to Allah and does not wait for others to give their consent

Jabir ibn Yazid Ju'fi is one of the trusted companions who kept the secrets of the Imams ('a) and has narrated many hadiths from Imam al-Baqir ('a). A lot of the hadiths which the Imam ('a) stated to Jabir were secrets and Jabir was not allowed to divulge those hadiths. He was despondent because he could not present those pure doctrines to those thirsty and desirous for knowledge; it was for this reason that [one day] he went to see Imam al-Baqir ('a) and said, "As a result of the secrets which you have narrated to me and have ordered that I must not divulge to a single human being, a heavy load has been placed on my shoulders so much so that sometimes I feel intense pressure in my chest and it seems as

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if I will go mad!" The Imam ('a) told him, "Yes Jabir, if such a state arises in you, go to

the mountainside or to the deserts and dig a ditch and put your head in it and say, 'Muhammad ibn 'Ali ('a) narrated this hadith to me…'"(1)

After that Jabir used to immerse his head in a well and recite the hadiths which Imam al-Baqir ('a) had narrated to him in order to lighten himself. One of the hadiths which Jabir narrates from Imam al-Baqir ('a) is the following:

"You will not be one of our friends unless you become such that if the people of your city unanimously oppose you and say, 'You are a bad person', you do not become offended and angry, and if all of them say, 'You are a very good man', you will not become happy, rather you must evaluate yourself according [to the standards of] the Book of Allah and if you perceive yourself moving along the path of that Book and you renounce what that Book has recommended that you abstain from, and incline towards what it has advised, and fear what it has warned you against, persevere and be glad because what people say will not harm you."(2)

The Imam ('a) invites Jabir towards faith and reliance on Allah—that he must have so much trust in Allah that people won't have any effect on him whether they curse or bless him and he must evaluate his conduct and speech according to the standards

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۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲, p. ۶۹.

۲- Ibid., vol. ۷۸, p. ۱۶۲, hadith ۱.

of the Book of Allah. He ought to be pleased if he sees that his deeds are in conformity with the Book of Allah and thank Allah for this grace and he ought to be upset when he conceives his behavior as not conforming to the Book of Allah because in that case Allah would not be pleased with him. Therefore, the criteria for contentment and displeasure are the injunctions of Allah not the pleasure and displeasure of human beings.

In decision making, if man has enough academic ability to distinguish his duties, he must be independent and not follow other people. With the help of the intellect which

Allah has granted him, he must take time to think and identify his duties while paying heed to the Qur'an and the hadiths and not be concerned about what other people say. Thereafter, when the turn for action comes, he ought to act according to what he has ascertained and not wait for other people to act accordingly.

Even if he remains alone in the battlefield against the enemy and even in the case that resistance is no longer incumbent upon him, he still continues to fight all alone although he knows that he will be martyred because resistance against the enemy is more pleasing to Allah. Without the least doubt, such bravery and valor is invaluable, and it brings about Allah's praise when an individual stands alone guarding his aims without losing his way and continues to resist regardless of being

left alone. In this regard, Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"I swear upon Allah that if all the Arabs unite to fight me, I will not flee from them and I will make haste to advance my attack on them once I find the opportunity to do so."(۱)

Therefore, the first factor [for encouraging deeds in solitude] is that Allah loves a believer who is independent in distinguishing his duties and also in carrying out his deeds and who does not wait for others nor endeavor to have the same habits as the crowd. Of course, it should not to be mistakenly imagined on account of what has been said that a human being ought to always be alone and move against other people all the time and always do the opposite of what everyone is doing.

This is an unacceptable and reproachable habit that is very foolish. That which is being asserted is that man ought to be independent in decision making, distinguishing duties and acting upon them and not wait for the encouragement, accompaniment and confirmation of other people. However, it is good and pleasing if once he has made a decision, other people accompany him, too.

Nevertheless, a person must not be such that once he has determined something to

be his duty and later on finds out that he has made a mistake, persists right up to the end; this is an unbecoming habit and an obstinate mental condition. Man has to always re-examine his morals, conducts and thoughts and

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۹۷۱, chapter [kitab] ۴۵, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

admit his errors with all his courage once he perceives that he has made mistakes and not stubbornly persist in his blunders nor insist on his erroneous remarks. A believer .acts on what is right once guided to it

b) Sincerity of Intention

The second factor which causes Allah's pride on account of the three groups of His slaves is sincerity of intention. A person who recites his prayers alone in the desert is not tainted by ostentation and sanctimony. There is no one watching so as to observe him and relate what he is doing to other people. With all certainty, the sincerity of such an individual is more than that of a person who discharges his duties in the presence .of others

If one recites his prayers with all its formalities in the presence of a number of people, there is the possibility of Satan tempting him because the devil is extremely deceitful and no matter how much a person has engaged in self-purification, there is still the possibility of being defeated by the devil and hypocrisy may appear in his heart and he might become pleased that other people are witnessing his deeds or hearing his .voice

However, when he is alone in the desert and recites adhan and iqamah and then recites the prayers, it is not possible for him to be ostentatious. Also, a person who wakes up in the middle of the night in the absence of any witnesses and embarks upon worshiping Allah and prostrates so long that he

falls asleep is not likely to be sanctimonious because there is no one to observe what .he is doing

A person who remains alone on the battlefield and fights single-handedly is not likely to be hypocritical since there are no companions to cheer him saying how much courage he has and to narrate his gallantry to other people after he has attained .martyrdom—the enemy will obviously not recount his bravery

Therefore, the other common characteristic existing among those three individuals which is the cause of Allah's pride is the utmost sincerity of intention that exists in .their deeds which has purified them from ostentation and sanctimony

As has been observed, it is likely that the type of the deeds of these three groups of people is similar to the type of works of other people; therefore, that which has granted superiority and distinction to their actions and has made their deeds so invaluable that Allah praises man over the angels on account of them is sincerity of .intention

Purity of intention is a factor for performing deeds only for Allah. It is for this reason that we see that it has been stated in the Qur'an and the hadiths that sincerity and purity of intention is the cause of the superiority of deeds and their being accepted by :Allah

إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْکَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ * أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ...

Indeed We have sent down the Book to you with the truth; so worship Allah, putting" pure faith in

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(Him. Now, surely, sincere obedience is due to Allah (alone)..."(۱

:It has been recorded in a hadith that

Springs of wisdom flow from the heart onto the tongue of a person who practices" (sincerity exclusively for Allah."(۲

:In regard to the blessed verse

الَّذِی خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَیاهَ لِیبْلُوَکُمْ أَیُّکُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِیزُ الْغَفُورُ

He, who created death and life that He may test you [to see] which of you is best in“ (conduct. And He is the Mighty, the Forgiving.”(۳

:Imam al-Sadiq stated

It is not numerousness of deeds that is desired by Allah, but correctness; and“ ”.correctness of works means fear of Allah and having a sincere intention

:Then, the Imam ('a) said

Persistence in sincerity is harder than performing the deeds themselves and sincerity“ in one's deeds means that one should not want any person to praise him for his works (save Allah, the Exalted, so the intention is greater than the deed.”(۴

With regard to what has been said, it is possible for us to have done virtuous deeds deserving a great deal of reward, such as participating in congregational prayers—according to narrations the rewards of which cannot be counted by the angels—but it is not clear whether the sincerity of intention in such prayers is the same as that of the .prayers of a person that recites in the desert in seclusion

Certainly, the devil tempts man and does not allow him to perform his deeds with complete sincerity. The evidence for this is that it is more difficult for people to take action

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۱- Surat al-Zumar ۳۹:۲-۳.
۲- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۶۷, p. ۲۴۲.
۳- Surat al-Mulk ۶۷:۲.
۴- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۲۶.

in worship once they are on their own, let alone fulfill all the formalities; this is

because willpower and motivation are not very strong. However, if other people are present and there is external motivating force, people engage in worship much more .easily

Lesson ۲۸: The Greatness of Worship and Servitude and its Existential Effects

point

In this section of the hadith, the greatness and superiority of worship and devotion to Allah, the Exalted, has been mentioned and also the fact that man's deeds—whether righteous or unrighteous—do not remain hidden from the eyes of witnesses and vigilantes; to the extent that the earth, on which we worship or perform unbecoming .acts will even give witness either in our favor or against us on the Judgment Day

It is not possible that our deeds and conduct could be without effects and consequences, but in addition to worldly repercussions the fruits of our deeds will become manifest in the hereafter also. In the hereafter, the ground on which we perform worship shall bear positive witness in regard to our worship, or will bear .witness against us and even curse us if we do unbecoming deeds upon it

The Witnessing of the Earth in regard to Man's Deeds

O Abu Dharr! There is no man who places his forehead on a part of the earth save" that it bears witness on the Day of Resurrection in regard to that, and there is no ".house in which people meet but that it blesses or curses them

Some great people would recite their prayers in different parts of the mosque instead of in one place, or when they entered

a house they would initially recite two rak'ats (cycles) of prayer. The reason they did this was to have more witnesses in their favor on the Day of Resurrection. This in .itself is cleverness, which is beneficial and praiseworthy for a believer

With regard to the superiority and value which has been mentioned in this and other

hadiths for prayer, persistence in reciting prayer in different places is an acknowledgement of submission and confidence in the sayings of the Noble Prophet (S)) and the Pure Imams ('a).

As can be observed, this section and the other parts of this same hadith are expressive of this fact that the earth, the trees and other inanimate creatures which we conjecture as lacking perception and awareness do have conception and cognizance and comprehend our deeds and bless us for our good deeds and curse us for our bad actions; in addition, they will bear witness either in our favor or against us on the Day of Resurrection.

Characteristics of the Praise of the Earth and Inanimate Objects

About this section of the hadith, where perception and awareness is characterized for the earth as well as inanimate objects, and also Qur'anic verses and other hadiths which have similar subject matter, great scholars have presented three points of view:

The first point of view: A number of scholars believe that these expressions are metaphorical and the intention is not their literal meaning and they mention allegorical interpretations for every instance correspondent with it. Perhaps the majority of exegetes have chosen this method in their interpretations of this type of

verse and hadith.

The second point of view: The gnostics and mystical philosophers, like Sadr al-Muta'allihin(۱) and their students believe that these existents truly have perception and awareness and glorify Allah and have fear of Allah, but we are unable to comprehend this reality.

These are the real meanings which they deduce from the Qur'anic verses and hadiths and assert that the trees, earth, stones and… have awareness and glorify Allah:

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِن شَيْءٍ إِلاَّ يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدَهِ وَلَكِنْ لاَ تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ ...

The seven heavens glorify Him, and the earth [too], and whoever is in them. There is“ not a thing but celebrates His praise, but you do not understand their (glorification...”(۲)

In the exegesis of the aforementioned verse, ‘Allamah Tabataba’i says, “This verse proves the glorification of material particles of the cosmos—that they glorify Allah and that they exempt Him from having any partners. Glorification means establishing the .transcendence of Allah through speech

Speech is essentially the unveiling of one’s inner intentions through signs and indicators. Because man has not found an existential way to express his intent, he is compelled to make use of words, which are sounds that have been established to signify various meanings and thus make intentions known. From then onwards, this method of explaining and understanding has become standard. In addition, man .makes use of hand and head signals and sometimes writes or posts signs

In short, that which unveils intentions is speech. The result of one’s endeavors to convey their intentions

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.Mulla Sadra -۱

.Surat al-Isra’ ۱۷:۴۴ -۲

is that person’s speech, even though that inner intention is not in the form of sounds and words. The proof of this point is that terms such as word, speech, command and revelation have been attributed to Allah in the Qur’an and without any doubt the way Allah conveys meaning is in no way similar to words and sayings uttered by human .beings

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, in the heavens and the earth and that which exists within them, something exists that openly declares the Oneness and Unity of Allah

and exonerates Him from all defects and imperfections. This is that all existents are in absolute need and want. This need is proof of the existence of the Being whom everything and everyone is in need and there is no thing independent and needless of Him. Therefore, all existents proclaim the presence of a Self-sufficient Creator by means of their existential need and natural imperfections.

In continuation, 'Allamah Tabataba'i states:

The word of Allah, the Exalted, is indicative of this fact that by creating existents, knowledge and awareness too have been spread in them and every one of them derives benefit from knowledge to the extent that they derive benefit from existence and being. This is not to say that they all have knowledge to the same extent and also not that the knowledge and awareness of all creatures is of one kind.

It is not true that the knowledge of all of the creatures is like the knowledge of man

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and/or that man is informed of the knowledge and awareness of every one of the creatures. For this reason, every created existent is in some way aware of itself and manifests its need and imperfection by means of its being and existence, which has become encompassed in the needlessness of Allah and that He has perfection and there is no lord save Him. Therefore, every created existent glorifies its Lord and exempts Him from every partner and imperfection.(۱)

The third point of view: All existents have a spiritual form in addition to their material forms which they possess in this world and in reality perception and awareness are a part of that spiritual and inner form and that same spiritual form becomes manifest on the Day of Resurrection and gives witness.

We do not comprehend that spiritual form in this world, that is why we do not conceive the glorification of things and do not perceive the effects of awareness and knowledge in them; but that [spiritual] form is existent and becomes manifest in the hereafter and the realities which it comprehends will appear and give witness.

According to the clear explanation of the Qur’an, on the Day of Resurrection even the skin of man bears witness against him, and the tongue, hands and legs all give witness against him. If these limbs did not have any perception, their evidence would be meaningless. In regard to the evidence of the limbs of the body, the Gracious Qur’an states:

وَقَالُوا لِجُلُودِهِمْ لِمَ شَهِدْتُمْ عَلَيْنَا

p: ٧٠

١- Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ١٣, pp. ١١٤-١١۶.

قَالُوا أَنْطَقَنَا اللَّهُ الَّذِی أَنْطَقَ کُلَّ شَیْءٍ ...

“They will say to their skins, ‘Why did you bear witness against us?’ They will say, ‘We were given speech by Allah, who gave speech to all things’.”(١)

If the skin of man does not have perception by which it conceives at the time of committing sins, how can it to give evidence on the Day of Resurrection in regard to sin which it was incapable of perceiving at the time it was committed? Evidence is meaningful once the witness has conceived and experienced the scene of sin; otherwise, testimony is useless.

If it is said that Allah, the Exalted, will compel the limbs and parts of the body to give evidence on the Day of Resurrection without their having perceived sin, it ought to be answered that in that case there is no evidence applicable and ascription of the term evidence on such an instance is purposeless. For this reason, the bearing of witness by the limbs of the body takes place after perception and experience and a kind of knowledge of the deed and in other than this case, giving evidence does not take place.

Therefore, according to the second and third points of view, there is no doubt in regard to the primary principle of the existence of perception, experience and a kind of knowledge and awareness in the order of creation.

However, differences of opinion exist in regard to the quality: is this knowledge accompanied by the transcendental soul of

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.Surat Fussilat ٤١:٢١ -١

things? Or, do they themselves truly have perception and awareness? Of course, the proponents of the first point of view assert that when the limbs and members of a human being manifest on the Day of Resurrection, the effects of man's conduct that .abide in the limbs are the same as their testimony

The Intelligence and Consciousness of Creatures and How they are Influenced

Perhaps among the above three points of view, the third perspective is the best. In any case, it can be gathered from the hadiths and the Qur'anic verses that material things and creatures have a kind of perception and awareness. Not only is their existential awareness constant, but they are affected by events which take place around them and these events that affect them consequently bring about new conceptions in them: when worship is performed in a place, it has a good effect, and .the place becomes delighted and expresses pride

In contrast, if sin is committed in a place, it leaves a bad effect on it and the earth becomes upset and curses the sinner. Of course, we are not able to comprehend these kinds of notions and the subject matter of these verses and hadiths has not become precisely clear to us, but we have to admit that there are unknown truths in the cosmos that are outside the realm of conception and understanding and our :knowledge of them is meager. As the Qur'an states

... وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً

(And you have not been given of knowledge except a little."(١..."

There are a great number of

.Surat al-Isra' ۱۷:۸۵ -۱

truths in the universe of which we have no knowledge. We have come to know some of these truths by means of revelation or because the great Prophets ('a) and the Pure Imams ('a) have explained them to us and we have confidence in their sayings, so we must be thankful to them that they have clarified these realities for us because, if they had not, our intellects would not have attained them and it would not have :been possible for us to conceive such truths with our imperfect intellects

كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولاً مِنكُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ

As We sent to you an apostle from among yourselves, who recites to you Our signs,“ and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and wisdom, and teaches you what you (did not know.”(۱

With regard to what has been mentioned, two points have become clear: the first point being that even if one attains a huge amount of knowledge and awareness and knows all the available scholarship of mankind, still what he knows is less than that which is unknown and his knowledge is still a drop in the bucket compared to that which exists in the universe; for this reason, one ought not to be proud and boastful. In addition, it is not even possible for an individual to acquire all the knowledge of .mankind

Every individual attains only a part of the existing knowledge—a drop from the boundless ocean of knowledge is allotted

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.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۵۱ -۱

to him. The second point is that we ought not to imagine that we live in a world where no one sees us when we do something in a secluded place: even if the earth does not conceive and understand, the angels who witness our deeds do perceive and write

our deeds and also there are those who do have complete predominance over this .universe and nothing remains hidden from their eyes

(The Expansive Domain of the Light of the Pure Imams ('a

On the basis of our belief as Shi'ah, the light of the Immaculate Imams ('a) is present everywhere, although we do not all comprehend their light as is befitting. The holy presence of the 'the Final Successor', Imam al-Mahdi, may Allah hasten his reappearance, is present everywhere, especially in the gatherings of the Shi'ahs, so much so that he replies to the greetings of an individual who greets him, but our ears are incapable of hearing what he says. If an individual shouts out for his help, he .responds to that person

If a lost one in the wilderness calls upon him, he hastens to help that individual and guides him, and he cures the sick who have lost hope in getting well. It is clear that he is present and he listens because, if he were not present and did not listen, how would he hasten to help and save a person who calls for his help once caught up at the ?bottom of the sea or lost in the wilderness

The late 'Allamah Majlisi narrates from his father

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that one of the righteous people of his age who had great piety and knowledge and went to hajj often, was well known for his ability of instantaneous transportation between places [tayy al-ard] came to Isfahan where I met him and asked him how he .attained this ability

He said, "One year I was traveling to the House of Allah with other pilgrims. I arrived at a place eight or nine stops away from honorable Mecca. I fell back and lost the caravan. I lost the way and went astray and became so thirsty that I lost all hope of ever remaining alive. In that state, I shouted out, 'O Aba Salih! Show me the way!' All of a sudden, I saw a man mounted on a camel coming my way. When he got near, I saw that he was a very handsome youth in splendid clothes with the appearance of a .great person carrying a vessel of water

I greeted him and he responded to my greeting and asked, 'Are you thirsty?' I said,“ 'Yes.' He gave me the water and I drank it. After that he said, 'Would you like me to take you to the caravan to join your companions?' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Get on the back of my camel.' I got on the back of his camel and he started moving towards Mecca. I started reciting the supplication of 'Hirz Yamani' as was my habit and after reciting a few words, that Arab youth taught

.me to recite it correctly

After a little while, he asked me, 'Do you know this place?' I looked and saw that I“ was at a place very close to Mecca. He told me to disembark from the camel. As soon as I disembarked from the camel, he disappeared from my sight. It was then that I realized that that handsome youth was the Imam of the Age, may Allah hasten his (reappearance.”(۱

Therefore, the light of the Imam ('a) is present everywhere even though we do not perceive it; however, comprehension of this truth is difficult for everyone and such realities if openly narrated without any constraints, may cause some to become .afflicted with hyperbolic exaggeration

Therefore, the lower levels of this issue have been explained and this is that the records of our deeds are presented to the Imam ('a), or as has been recorded in some hadiths that the records of our deeds are presented to the Noble Prophet (S) and Allah. It has been recorded in a hadith that on one occasion talk about the days of the :week was brought up, and when Thursday was mentioned, Imam al-Rida ('a) stated

The day when the deeds of Allah's servants are presented to Allah, the Noble ... “ (Prophet (S) and the Imams is Thursday.”(۲

It has been recorded in some of the hadiths that the angels take the deeds of man to the Throne in the evening after recording them and present them to Allah. Now, perhaps one might ask: is

.Tabari Nuri, Kifayat al-Muwahhidin, vol. ۲, p. ۱۸۲ -۱
.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲۳, p. ۳۴۶ -۲

Allah not present in all places that the angels take the records of man's deeds to His Throne? However, it must be understood that the levels of existence have special needs and the presentation of deeds also has a particular discipline which is suitable with the order of Divine Lordship and this is not contradictory with the fact that Allah is .present in every place

Deeds do not Remain Hidden from the Eyes of Witnesses

With regard to what has been mentioned, we have to be aware that we do not live in a world devoid of comprehension and perception: in this world seeing eyes and listening ears exist which bear witness to our actions and words and on the basis of the apparent meanings of some Qur'anic verses and hadiths, even the earth, the trees and the birds have perception and do understand, and of course we are .unaware of this fact

Even if this is not so, at least there are angels who bear witness to our deeds, and higher than this is the holy presence of the Imam of the Age, may Allah hasten his reappearance, who sees our actions and even higher than all is the Divine Essence of :Allah watching over our deeds

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدًا

(Indeed Allah is witness to all things."(۱..."

In regard to His awareness about the apparent and hidden deeds of man and also the :watching of the angels over the actions of man, Allah, the Exalted, states

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الإِنسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ

.Surat al-Nisa’ ۴:۳۳ -۱

حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ * إِذْ يَتَلَقَّى الْمُتَلَقِّيَانِ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ قَعِيدٌ * مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

And certainly We have created man and We know to what his soul tempts him, and“ we are nearer to him than his jugular vein. When the twin recorders record [his deeds] seated on the right hand and on the left, he says no word but that there is a ready (observer beside him.”(۱)

Elsewhere, in regard to the witnessing of the Noble Prophet (S) on the Day of :Resurrection, Allah states

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَى هَؤُلَاءِ شَهِيدًا

So how shall it be, when we bring from every nation a witness, and We bring you as a“ (witness to them?”(۲)

From these verses which state the witnessing of the Prophet of Allah (S) and the other witnesses, it can be deduced that those witnesses observe the deeds of Allah’s servants in this world; otherwise, how would they bear witness if they did not witness the actions of people in this world? Is it possible for a person to bear witness to an !?event he has not seen

If we pay heed to this point that the world which we live in is not dead and is not devoid of awareness and perception, but instead there are beings who see us and observe and witness over our deeds even though we do not see them, we will be alert and think twice in regard to our conduct and modesty

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.Surat Qaf ۱۶-۱۸ -۱
.Surat al-Nisa’ ۴:۴۱ -۲

.and this will be a hindrance to our doing indecent deeds

If people pay heed to the fact that when they commit sin, the earth and the sky will

bear witness to their deeds, that there are books in which lists of man's deeds are recorded and that all actions will become apparent on the Day of Resurrection, they will abstain from perpetrating wrongdoing and not commit sin even in seclusion. As Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"Beware of disobeying Allah in solitude, because the witness (of that) situation is also the judge."(1)

If you are in a condition you are not willing to be seen by anyone and someone takes a picture of you, you make every effort to destroy that picture lest in the future that photo is seen by others. Without the least doubt, man does not want a picture which will bring about shame and embarrassment to be taken of him. At the time of taking pictures, a person adorns himself, wears clean clothes and tries to show an attractive appearance so as to make the picture appear as charming as possible.

Again, it is not pleasing for a picture to be taken which will cause one shame. With regard to this similitude, we must understand that natural causes like the earth, the sky, doors and walls are always taking pictures of us and on the Day of Resurrection those pictures will be made apparent for all to see. For this reason, we ought to try not to let them

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۱- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۴۲۰, trans. Shahidi.

get pictures of us in ugly and shameful circumstances in order not to become embarrassed on the Day of Resurrection when all our deeds and thoughts will become apparent:

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوَءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا...

"The day when every soul will find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil, it will wish there were a far distance between it and that (evil)."(1)

Sincerity of Intention in Allah's Servants Brings about Joy and Pride

O Abu Dharr! There is no morning and evening that passes save that the different“ points of the earth ask each other, ‘O my neighbor! Has a person glorifying Allah passed by?’ or ‘Has one of His servants placed his forehead on you in prostration for Allah?’ Some points of the earth say ‘Yes!’ and some other points say, ‘No.’ Every point which says ‘Yes’, takes pride in itself and becomes happy, and considers itself higher ”.than the other points

Another issue which has been discussed in this noble hadith is that the point of the earth on which Allah’s servant worships and prostrates takes pride in itself. We must consider what the secret of this boasting is. Its secret is that principally that which is valuable in the presence of Allah is attention to Him and all deeds only become worthwhile when they are accompanied by this attention and performed with the .intention of winning Allah’s favor

A deed is done for the sake of winning Allah’s favor when it

.Surat Al ‘Imran ۳:۳۰ -۱

is performed with attentive remembrance of Allah. The actions of a person that is negligent of Allah cannot be done with the intention of winning His favor. Such a deed is done either with the intention of pleasing one’s own heart or for the purpose of gratifying the hearts of human beings and has no value whatsoever in the eyes of .Allah

Therefore, remembrance of Allah and paying heed to Him and anything which connects man to the eternal world has validity, and everything else becomes valuable in the shadow of heedful remembrance of Allah and is worthless without His .remembrance

For this reason, man’s true perfection is attained through attention to Allah and if this is suffused like a soul into all the deeds of man, those deeds acquire value. In other than this case, without paying heed to Allah and without accompanying deeds and

worship and divine and sincere intention, they become like a dead body devoid of spirit. Therefore, it is befitting that all our deeds and acts of worship are done for Allah:

قُلْ إِنِّی أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّینَ

"Say, 'Indeed I have been commanded to worship Allah with exclusive faith in Him, and I have been commanded to be the first of those who submit [to Him]'."(1)

The Noble Prophet's (S) emphasis on sincerity, especially sincerity in religion, is because man is Allah's servant, he has been created for devotional servitude to Allah and he ought to pursue perfection, prosperity and spiritual growth in all

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1- Surat al-Zumar 39:11.

the stages of his life and because this important issue is not attainable except under the auspices of sincerity and being attentive to Allah.

Therefore, purifying acts of worship and sincere devotion to Allah is the most important religious order because it is an important cause for man's gaining proximity to Allah, the Exalted, and attaining desirable perfection. For this reason, Allah, the Exalted, in the Gracious Qur'an has invited the believers to sincerity. It should be understood that man can attain levels where Allah, the Exalted, purifies him for Himself, as praise has been heaped upon the sincere in various instances in the Qur'an, for example, in regard to Moses ('a):

وَاذْكُرْ فِی الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولاً نَبِیًّا

"And mention in the Book Moses. Indeed he was exclusively dedicated [to Allah], and an apostle and a prophet."(1)

Naturally, the purified [mukhlas] needs a purifier [mukhlis] and beyond the shadow of doubt it is Allah who purifies the pure, to the extent that the devil cannot ensnare

:them towards perversions

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِکَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ * إِلَّا عِبَادَکَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ

He said, 'By Your might, I will surely pervert them, except your exclusive servants" (among them."(۲)

In explanation of this Qur'anic verse it ought to be said that the pure and sincere person has a mental, spiritual and divine power which is a hurdle against his falling in the trap of the devils and Satan cannot have a bad effect on them. Of course, the sincere derive benefit of such power by

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۱- Surat Maryam ۱۹:۵۱.

۲- Surat Sad ۳۸:۸۲-۸۳.

the grace and mercy of Allah. In regard to Prophet Joseph ('a), Allah, the Exalted, :states

وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهِ وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْ لَا أَنْ رَأَى بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ كَذَلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوءَ وَالْفَحْشَاءَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ

And certainly she made for him; and he would certainly have made for her [too] had" he not beheld the proof of his Lord; so it was, that We might turn away from him all (evil and indecency. He was indeed one of Our dedicated servants."(۱)

It has been emphasized in this verse that Joseph ('a) was not afflicted by sin and wrong-doing, despite the fact that suitable and tempting conditions had been made available to him; circumstances in which any other person might have fallen in the .trap of the devil

Prophet Joseph ('a) was at that time at the peak of maturity and the blossoming of sexual desire and the circumstances in the house of the King of Egypt were filled with welfare and comfort. In addition, the wife of the King of Egypt had created a situation such that, if Joseph had not perceived the proof of Allah, he would have fallen into

.temptation

Sincerity of Intention Brings about Superiority in Works

Regarding the previous discussion, that which adds value to the deeds of human beings and is a cause for redemption from the implicit and explicit traps of the devil is purity of intention and attention to Allah, the Exalted; therefore, even the best and greatest of deeds lack any value and worth if they are not done for Allah. In

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.Surat Yusuf ۱۲:۲۴ -۱

the words of the hadiths and Qur'anic verses, the best of deeds is jihad (striving in the :way of Allah), to the extent that Allah states

... فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ الْمُجاهِـدِينَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِـهِمْ عَلَى الْقَاعِـدِينَ دَرَجَةً وَكُلًّا وَعَـدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْـنَى وَفَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Allah has graced those who wage jihad with their possessions and their persons by a" degree over those who sit back; and to each Allah has promised the best of reward, and Allah has graced those who wage jihad over those who sit back with a great (reward."(۱

Now this very jihad, despite all its superiority and excellence, is devoid of any value if it is carried out without any attention to Allah and without a divine intention. According to some narrations, in one of the wars during the early days of Islam, one man on the battlefield fought with utmost bravery and valiance and finally was killed. The fighting .and bravery of that man aroused the admiration of the other Muslim soldiers

For this reason, they addressed the Noble Prophet (S), "Surely, that man has a very high position in the eyes of Allah on account of his brave and courageous fighting." The Noble Prophet (S) responded, "He has not been killed in the way of Allah, but in the way of his horse!" (That man's horse had become entrapped in the army of the enemy as a result of fear and dread, and that man fought very hard in order to rescue

his horse from

.Surat al-Nisa' ۴:۹۵ -۱

(.the enemy until he finally was killed

Of course, not every jihad, endeavor in Allah's cause or martyrdom brings about perfection. Only martyrdom which is accompanied by attention to Allah can result in perfection, like our beloved martyrs who made vows [nadhr] to become martyred during the Iran-Iraq war. Some would go to the Mosque of Jamkaran for forty nights on Fridays and/or Thursdays and ask Allah to grant them their wish of martyrdom. This kind of martyrdom is valuable because it is accompanied by remembrance and .attention to Allah

The superiority and value or inferiority of man's deeds and conduct are related to one's intention: a person's deeds are valuable if his intention is pure and his deeds are done for the sake of Allah. The more one's remembrance of Allah and the more his love and knowledge increase, the more the value of his deeds increases. In contrast, if man's deeds are done without knowledge and love of Allah and without attention to .and remembrance of Him, they are like a dead body devoid of vital force and benefit

When the various points of the earth ask from each other, they do not enquire, "Has anyone done the jihad or spent his property in the way of Allah upon you?" On the contrary, they ask, "Has anyone remembered Allah upon you or not?" Therefore, the deeds of man are considered as worship if they are done with attention to Allah. One's jihad, prayers, and spending property in the way of Allah

.are all considered to be worship if they are done with a sincere intention for Allah

Acquisition of knowledge, teaching, academic discussion and even listening to speeches are considered to be worship once done with a pure intention for Allah.

However, if sincerity of intention is absent, not only are one's deeds not worship, they are also a means of attracting the attention of other human beings. Hence, the thing that is important and worthy of attention, to the extent that even elements of the earth have conceived it, is attention to Allah and the Divine Presence.

When we turn the pages of the Glorious Qur'an, we do not find any scene in which the invocation and glorification of Allah has not been mentioned. One of the statements of Allah, the Exalted, is:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا

"O you who have faith! Remember Allah with frequent remembrance."(۱)

In another place, after citing for the wise reasons for creating the sky, the earth and the rotation of the night and day, Allah, the Exalted, thus introduces those who possess wisdom:

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَى جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ...

"Those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth [and say], 'Our Lord, You have not created this in vain!'..."(۲)

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) says that Prophet Moses ('a) thus requested from Allah, the Exalted:

"O Allah! There are times and states in which I feel embarrassed to invoke

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۱- Surat al-Ahzab ۳۳:۴۱.

۲- Surat Al 'Imran ۳:۱۹۱.

You!" (Perhaps he meant the time of easing nature.) Allah responded, "O Moses! My invocation is good and acceptable in all states."(۱)

It is for this reason that supplications have been recorded even for times of using the toilet and when easing nature, so that man does not become forgetful of worshiping Allah even in that state because Allah is never pleased that even one moment of our lives is passed in forgetfulness or that we become negligent of worshiping Him and it is for this reason that man's perfection is attained under the auspices of devotion and .servitude to Allah

Therefore, we must strive to be attentive to Allah, the Exalted, at all times, even though that attention may be weak. Invocation and remembrance of Allah is an alchemy which, added to a valueless item, causes the item to acquire the highest .value; this alchemy bestows value and purpose to our lives

Lesson ۲۹: Devotion and Worship, the Greatest Assets for Humanity

point

O Abu Dharr! Any youth who, for the sake of Allah, abstains from the world and its" vanity and spends his youth in obedience to Allah until he reaches old age, Allah grants him the reward and bounty equivalent to the reward and bounty of seventy ".two of His most sincere and honest servants

The Parasitic Nature of the World

In this section of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) embarks upon expounding the importance of seeking excellence and the superiority of a person who has traversed the path of perfection, because it can be gathered from the Qur'anic verses and hadiths that the

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱۳, p. ۳۴۳ -۱

world, with all its expansiveness and greatness, has been created for the perfection of humanity. In reality, the main reason for the creation of this world is humanity, and :the rest of the creatures are at the service of human beings. Allah, the Exalted, states

وَهُوَ الَّذِی خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ فِی سِتَّهِ أَیَّامٍ وَکَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَی الْمَاء لِیَبْلُوَکُمْ أَیُّکُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلاً...

It is He who created the heavens and the earth in six periods—and His dominion" (extends) upon the waters—that He may test you [to see] which of you is best in (conduct."(۱)

The purport of the blessed verse is that Allah, the Exalted, created the heavens, the earth and the natural world to prepare the basis for the creation of human beings, and He created human beings to test them. The meaning of this verse is wonderful and understanding it deeply can have positive effects on people's thoughts and .conduct

This reality that Allah, the Exalted, has created the cosmos with all its greatness for the purpose of bringing man into existence so that he can attain perfection by making use of the existential capacities in the world is indicative of the degree of man's value .and the profoundness of his responsibilities

Mentioning the aforesaid is necessary for the reason that human beings, from among the rest of the existing creatures, ought to perceive their existential value and realize that they are not simple creatures like the worm, the frog or others of these types; on the contrary, humans are esteemed and invaluable

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۱- Surat Hud ۱۱:۷.

creatures and magnificent existential capital has been provided in order to bring .about and facilitate the conditions of their lives

The world has been created in its entire splendor so that the basis for the creation of an intelligent, self-willed and determined existent could be provided. Therefore, man's obligation, as an intelligent and thinking existent, is to initially perceive his existential value. However, conceiving this point is not enough in itself despite all its importance; rather, he ought to comprehend his responsibilities, too, in the created

world and realize that he has not been created for vanity, futility, purposelessness .and uselessness

Among all the creatures of the world, man has characteristics which are not found in other existents; that is to say, man has been blessed with the intellect. When we say that man has superiority and prominence over the rest of the creatures this is not only in regard to the intellect; man is higher than the rest of the existents in regard to the .other attributes and qualities as well

Whatever perfection is found in the other creatures, it is found in man in the best sense of the word. This asserted meaning becomes completely clear when man is compared with the rest of the creatures and when his discoveries with regard to food, .clothing, accommodation and marriage are pondered

We see that the adaptations and discoveries which man puts to use in the order and management of his social activities are not found in any other creature. In addition

to this, people employ other creatures in order to attain their goals, but the rest of the animals and the vegetables and other than these are not like this; on the contrary, they have simple effects and activities especially reserved for them: from the day that they were created up to now, they have not gone a step further than their own situations and have not had any transformations for themselves. On the other hand, man has taken great strides towards perfection in all the aspects of his life and .continues to take even further steps

In short, the progeny of Adam enjoys the benefit of a certain characteristic and it is because of that very quality, that is to say the intellect, that it has attained distinction over the rest of the creatures and distinguishes right from wrong, good from evil and .beneficial from harmful

The Pre–eminence of the Complete Human Being

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِی آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِی الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلاً

Certainly We have honored the Children of Adam, and carried them over land and" sea, and provided them with all the good things, and given them an advantage over many of those We have created with complete preference."(۱)

In interpretation of this verse, 'Allamah Tabataba'i, may Allah be pleased with him, states:

This verse is in the form of obligation of indebtedness for favors; of course, obligation mixed with reproof. Indeed, after Allah, the Exalted, mentions the abundance of His graces and His successive granting of blessings and virtues to man,

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۱- Surat al-Isra' ۱۷:۷۰.

including mounts to cross the deserts and the seas in order for him to acquire those graces and necessary subsistence in order to better manage his life, He mentions the point that man has forgotten his Lord, shunned Him, has not asked from Him and has once again returned to his previous ways after being saved from the sea even though he has always been immersed in Allah's graces.

Allah, the Exalted, lists a summary of His graces and favors in this verse so that people may understand that their Lord has provided them numerous favors and realize that it is very unfortunate that they are ungrateful for these favors and other divine graces.(۱)

We see that there is much room for human beings to realize the value of the gem or pearl of existence and not sell it in exchange for the vain and valueless merchandise of this world.

Man needs special conditions and facilities in order to attain human perfection and the world with all its transformations and developments is placed at his disposal. We know to some extent that if the constant transformations and order of the natural world were not existent, man's volitional life would either not take place or it would

.take place in an incomplete form

In brief, it is known that the world has an orderly system and its various factors are in need of one another. An example of one of those factors is the attraction that exists among planets in the heavens such that

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.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۱۳, p. ۱۶۵, third ed., Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah Publications -۱

if that determined and precise attraction were to be interfered with and one of those spheres were to leave its orbit, the order of the planets would be thrown into disarray .and a catastrophe would take place

As has been indicated, the universe with all its magnificence is a prerequisite for the creation and perfection of humanity, and the perfection that humans must attain is so valuable that the universe with all its expansiveness and majesty is made to be their stepping stone. Of course, among human beings, there are few individuals who attain ultimate perfections and the rest of the people achieve certain benefits under the auspices of the existence of those few individuals and the merit of their existence is .dependent on the existence of the chosen ones

As a simile, in order to find a few diamonds in a great mine of fifty square kilometers with a great depth, miners must do a lot of exploration and searching. The aim of all this probing is to find a few precious diamonds, even if besides diamonds, coal, which does not have as much value, is dug up too, it does not matter so much. Therefore, besides diamonds, which are the main aim of opening up a mine, other substances too are found, which have secondary value, and in addition worthless stones, which .do not have any value at all and thus are cast aside

The object of creating the cosmos is the pure lights, the most prominent and outstanding of

them being the lights of the Fourteen Infallibles (‘a) and after them the rest of the Prophets (‘a) and the people who join their category on account of the level of their excellence and purification. (There have been approximately one hundred and twenty four thousand Prophets (‘a) and saints [awliya’] of Allah (‘a) and some of the Prophets (‘a) and saints [awliya’] (‘a) are higher in status than the others but we do not know their numbers.)

The highest human ideals have been summed up in the Noble Prophet (S) and his Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and the lowest levels of excellence are found in people who will enter paradise after everyone else. The rest of the human beings whose hearts are devoid of the light of faith are like the worthless stones and are burnt in the infernal fire of divine wrath:

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنْسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لاَ يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لاَ يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لاَ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا...

“Certainly We have created for hell many of the jinn and humans: they have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, they have ears with which they do not hear...”(١)

The dwellers of hell are the wastes of this world and the main aim of creating this cosmos is the Noble Prophet (S), Fatimah al-Zahra’ (‘a) and the Infallible Imams (‘a). The whole world, despite all its expansiveness and magnificence as well as perfection and excellence, is

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١- Surat al-A‘raf ٧:١٧٩.

not comparable to the existence of any one of them! On the contrary, one day of their being has more worth than this whole universe. The real owners of this cosmos are people who have attained prosperity in the eyes of Allah and have set up their abodes in His proximity:

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِى جَنَّاتٍ وَنَهَرٍ * فِى مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ مَلِيكٍ مُقْتَدِرٍ

Indeed the pious will be amid gardens and rivers in the abode of truthfulness with an“ (Omnipotent Sovereign.”(١)

(Paradise, the Dwelling of the Believers and the Friends of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a

Muslims believe that the people who die in a state of faith and belief go to the garden of eternal bliss, namely paradise; even if they have the lowest levels of faith and on condition that at the time of death that conviction is not transformed into disbelief .((they enter paradise after passing through the state of purgatory

There is no doubt that ideal faith is procured under the auspices of loving and :believing in the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt (‘a); as the Noble Prophet (S) states

Verily a person who dies loving the family of Muhammad (S) in his heart has passed“ away as a believer possessing complete faith; truly the angel of death gives the glad (tidings of paradise to a person who dies loving the family of Muhammad (S)...”(٢)

For this reason a Shi‘ah who is a lover of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and is humbly submissive and obedient to the orders and wishes of Allah and His saints [awliya’] (‘a) does not have any misgivings in regard to

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.Surat al-Qamar ۵۴:۵۴-۵۵ -١
.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٢٣, p. ٢٣٣ -٢

death because in the viewpoint of a believer death is a bridge for attaining the .pleasure of Allah, the Exalted

:Addressing his companions on the day of ‘Ashura, Imam al-Husayn (‘a) says

O people of noble birth! Be patient because death is nothing but a bridge which“ delivers you from hardships and tribulations to expansive gardens and eternal bliss. (Verily who among you does not like to leave the prison and go to the palace?”(١)

In regard to the ardent desire of the God-fearing to meet their Lord, Imam ‘Ali (‘a)

:says

If there were no appointed hour for their (i.e. the God-fearing ones') death, their" souls would not for a single moment remain in their bodies on account of their ardent desire for divine reward and their fear of divine retribution. The Creator is great in their souls; it is for this reason that everyone [and everything else] is small in their (eyes."(۲

"?A person asked Abu Dharr, "Why do we [human beings] have an aversion of death

:Abu Dharr responded

Because you have cultivated and developed your material world but have" devastated your hereafter. Therefore, you are not willing to leave prosperity to go to (your ruin."(۳

Individuals will derive benefit from paradise in relation to their faith and their deeds: some people will enter purgatory after death and thereafter find their way to heaven. However, some people who were sinners, even if faint light of faith shines from their being, will only enter paradise after being requited by divine retribution and all too often they

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.Shaykh Saduq, Ma'ani al-Akhbar, p. ۲۸۹ -۱
.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۶۱۲, sermon [khutbah] ۱۸۴, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۲
.Fayd Kashani, Muhajjah al-Bayda', vol. ۸, p. ۲۵۸ -۳

will enter paradise after long years of torture and punishment and after being cleansed from their sins and contaminations like gold which is placed in a furnace in order to be purified from impurities to be transformed into pure gold. Without the least doubt, these are not the companions of paradise, but are guests who have been admitted into heaven on account of the intercession of the real masters of paradise .and as a result of the grace and mercy of Allah, the Exalted

point

:Allah, the Exalted, thus describes the real masters of paradise in His book

وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُوْلَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللّهُ عَلَيْهِم مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا

Whoever obeys Allah and the Apostle—they are with those whom Allah has blessed,“ including the prophets and the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous, and excellent (companions are they!”(١

In this blessed verse four groups of people have been mentioned as the true dwellers of heaven. The rest of the people will only enter paradise by means of following them and as a result of their intercession and in reality they are the hosts and owners of the house and the others are guests. The owners of paradise, that is to say the prophets (‘a), the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous are people upon whom Allah has completed His favor and He has ordered us to request in our prayers that He guide us :to their way

إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ المُسْتَقِيمَ * صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

Guide us“

.Surat al-Nisa’ ۴:۶٩ -١

(on the straight path; the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favors.”(١

It is worth mentioning that the purport of ‘martyrs’ in the above verse is those who bear witness to man’s deeds on the Day of Resurrection whose status is much higher than the rest of the martyrs, such that ‘Allamah Tabataba’i states: the meaning of shahadat (in some Qur’anic verses) is to bear witness to the deeds of human beings. What is meant by this is to endure and see the truth of deeds which people perform in the world, whether that truth is prosperity or wretchedness. Therefore, the witness

on the Day of Resurrection bears testimony on the basis of what he has seen. The Day of Resurrection is a day when Allah asks all things to bear witness, even the limbs of the body. The Day of Reckoning is the day when the Noble Prophet (S) will say:

... يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِى اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا

"...O my Lord! Indeed my people have treated this Qur'an as a forsaken thing."(٢)

It is quite apparent that such a noble minded spirit and generous station is not allotted to all people in the Islamic community, because this is special nobility particularly reserved and befitting of the saints [awliya'] of Allah... the lowest level which these witnesses (witnesses of our deeds) possess is that they are under the guardianship of Allah, under the auspices of His grace and followers of the straight path.(٣)

We have concluded that the most superior

١- Surat al-Fatihah ١:۶-٧.

٢- Surat al-Furqan ٢٥:٣٠.

٣- Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ١, pp. ٣٢۴ -٣٢٥, third ed., Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah Publications.

servants of Allah, those in whose right He has completed His favor and has appointed them the companions of paradise, are the prophets ('a), the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous and the rest of the worshipers of Allah attain paradise on account of following these four groups of people. Of course, the people who find their way into paradise by means of following these four groups of chosen servants of Allah are varied in regard to their levels and are not all in one station, and even those among the four groups of Allah's chosen ones are not all on the same level and some are higher than the others.

(a) The Station of the Prophets ('a) and the Great Prophet of Islam (S

On the basis of Allah's statement, the Prophets ('a) have been allotted higher positions than the rest of the people:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَى آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

Indeed Allah chose Adam and Noah, and the progeny of Abraham and the progeny of“ ‘Imran above all the nations.”(١)

:In addition to this, He has made some of the prophets (‘a) higher than the others

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ...

These are the apostles, some of whom We gave an advantage over others...”(٢)“

From among the hundred and twenty four thousand prophets who Allah sent for the guidance of mankind, only three hundred thirteen had an apostolic mission. Even then, not all the apostles possessed divine law. Only five of them were given divine law. Those who possessed divine law were Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and the .(Noble Prophet Muhammad (S

.Surat Al ‘Imran ٣:٣٣ -١
.Surat al-Baqarah ٢:٢٥٣ -٢

These legislator prophets (‘a) have a higher status than the rest of the apostles (‘a) and, according to our belief, the Last Prophet (S) is distinguished above all the :prophets (‘a). As he himself stated

O ‘Ali! Allah, the Blessed, the Exalted, has made His prophets (‘a) higher than the“ angels in His proximity and He has made me superior to all the prophets (‘a) and messengers (‘a) and after me superiority belongs to you and the Imams (‘a) after you; and verily the angels are our servants and they are the servants of our friends.”(١)

This proves that the main aim of creating humanity is the chosen ones of Allah and in the same way that ordinary people are different in ranks and perfections, there are differences too among the prophets (‘a) and the righteous and the friends of Allah in regard to high human perfections and levels although this is not comprehensible for

.us and only Allah is aware of everyone’s ranks

The divine prophets (‘a) and the saints [awliya’] of Allah (‘a) were not contaminated by polytheism and sin even for the time it takes for the blink of an eye. This refers to polytheism in the real sense of being preoccupied by other than Allah; thus, they could never at all have been idol-worshippers. Their object of desire and goal was Allah and .they did not have any other goal except Him

If they had any attention to other than Allah, it was out of duty for the purpose of

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ١٨, p. ٣۴۵ -١

obeying His orders that had been requested of them, in order not to be heedless the servants of Allah and in order to attain their principle aims; of course, they would make use of material means in order to attain their aims, but their goal was Allah and .nothing more

We only have a weak conception of the high level of the prophets (‘a). We cannot perceive the depth of their superior station and all too often our intellects become bewildered when we try to contemplate their rank. Only they and their Lord are aware of their station and the rest of the people are incapable of knowing their :human level and that which they have attained

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَا أُخْفِیَ لَهُمْ مِنْ قُرَّهِ أَعْیُنٍ جَزَاءًا بِمَا کَانُوا یَعْمَلُونَ

So no one knows what has been kept hidden for them of that which will refresh the“ (eyes as a reward for what they used to do.”(١

[b) The Station of the Righteous [Salihin

One of the high levels of human beings that has been mentioned is the station of the righteous [salihin]. In regard to their high level and the superiority of their station, :(Allah quotes Prophet Moses (‘a

رَبِّ هَبْ لِی حُکْمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِی بِالصَّالِحِینَ

“My Lord! Grant me [unerring] judgment, and unite me with the righteous.”(۲)

Elsewhere, Allah states:

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَقَ وَیَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً وَکُلاًّ جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِینَ

“And We gave him Isaac, and Jacob as well for a grandson, and each of them We made righteous.”(۳)

[c) The Station of the Truthful [Siddiqin

Another lofty human level is the station of the truthful [siddiqin]. The word ‘siddiqin’ denotes extreme

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۱- Surat al-Sajdah ۳۲:۱۷.

۲- Surat al-Shu‘ara’ ۲۶:۸۳.

۳- Surat al-Anbiya’ ۲۱:۷۲.

truthfulness and sincerity; that is to say, people who are very truthful. What is worthy of mentioning is that truthfulness is not only confined to the tongue; one of the instances of truthfulness is the words which man utters and another is the deeds which he does. A man is truthful once his deeds conform to his words because deeds make the inner belief known and man is truthful in the relating of his inner belief once he makes known what is in his conscience in a complete manner and nothing remains hidden; such a deed is correct and truthful.

True speech too is that word which corresponds with reality and the external world and because talking too is an action, a person that is truthful in his action will inevitably not speak except what he knows to be correct and he is also aware that words must be well-timed, well-suited and correct. For this reason, such speech is indicative of the truthfulness of the report and is also expressive of the truthfulness of

.the speaker

Therefore, a truthful person is one who never lies at all and does not do what he is not certain to be correct, no matter how much it suits his carnal desires. Likewise, he does not say what he is not sure about and does not do what is not compatible with devotional servitude to Allah. Describing himself, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states:

“Certainly, I belong to the group of people who care not for the reproach of

p: ۱۰۱

anybody in matters concerning Allah. Their countenance is the countenance of the truthful and their speech is the speech of the virtuous.”(۱)

The station of the truthful is such a superior station that when Allah, the Exalted, wants to describe the ranks of some of his prophets (‘a), He states:

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا

“And mention Abraham in the book. Indeed he was a truthful one, a Prophet.”(۲)

Or in regard to Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ (‘a), He says:

وَأُمُّهُ صِدِّيقَةٌ

“And his mother was a truthful one.”(۳)

Of course, we do not covet to attain such a lofty station as the stations of the righteous and truthful, but in any case man’s ambition does not have to be low. He ought to strive according to his aptitudes and capacities and endeavor to arrive at the highest levels possible. Man ought to try to attain levels which fallible people are capable of attaining.

There were people among the Islamic scholars who attained high human levels and we have known and seen with our own eyes some of them and many prominent people have reached the peak of perfection which is befitting of exalted people but

we are not aware. Without the least doubt, these high ranks are only attainable under .the auspices of high ambition and relentless effort

The Station of Infallibility Especially Reserved for the Chosen Ones of Allah

Allah has not placed any hindrances in humanity's way to perfection and completion; human beings can arrive at high levels like the station of the righteous if they have motivation to do

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۲۲۴, sermon [khutbah] ۱۹۲, trans. Shahidi -۱
.Surat Maryam ۱۹:۴۱ -۲
.Surat al-Ma'idah ۵:۷۵ -۳

so, although they cannot become one of the Infallibles. The station of the truthful and .the righteous is lower than the station of the Infallibles

Therefore, every human being can arrive at those stations; every person can manage not to commit sin in his life and in truth a person who strives to avoid the contamination of sin and abstain from the desires of the carnal soul and only do that which is pleasing to Allah is practically infallible even though the term 'infallible' cannot :technically be applied to him. To explain this issue, it ought to be said

Ismah" (infallibility) literally means holding and being a hindrance, and in technical"" terms it means a habit of the soul, man's second nature so to speak, which prevents a person possessing it from committing sin or even mistakes and errors. Now the question is: is this second nature a hindrance and that is why they call it infallibility or is it that Allah prevents the person having this habit and second nature from committing ?sin, mistakes and error

In essence, both meanings are correct: we are not mistaken whether we say the infallible individual is a person who has a second nature and hindrance which prevents him from committing sin and error or when we say that an infallible person is a man whom Allah prevents from sin and error because He protects him by means of this

same second nature. Therefore, one who is infallible is a person who is immune

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.from error and sin or one who is immune from sin

The first kind of infallibility is related to one's works, but the second type of infallibility is broader than just deeds; that is to say, it also includes the levels of perception and distinguishing right from wrong because the infallible person in the second sense of the word is an individual who not only is practically exempted from sin but also does not make errors in perceiving and distinguishing what is right from what is wrong. In other words, he understands and explains correctly as well as practically acting .flawlessly

In regard to the infallibility of the prophets ('a) and the Infallible Imams ('a), 'Allamah Tabataba'i, may Allah be pleased with him, asserts, "The Gracious Qur'an clearly states that Allah has selected and chosen them for Himself and has purified them for :Himself, as the Qur'an states

وَمِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ وَإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَاجْتَبَيْنَاهُمْ وَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

And from among their fathers, their descendants and brethren, and We chose them" (and guided them to the straight path."(۱

Allah has granted them such a high level of knowledge that it prevents them from committing sins and offenses. As a result of having that second nature, perpetrating sin (even minor sins) is inconceivable for them. Though infallibility and justice both prevent the perpetration of sin, their difference is that infallibility, as second nature, makes the perpetuation of sin impossible whereas justice as a second nature does .not make it impossible

Even though infallibility as a second nature

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.Surat al-An‘am ۶:۸۷ -۱

cannot be violated and its effects are definite and permanent, it does not alter human nature—which is self-determination in voluntary actions—and does not force a person to be infallible. How can it compel while knowledge is the foundation of free will and the strengthening of knowledge results in the strengthening of resolution. For example, if a person that desires health is certain that a particular thing is a deadly poison, his certainty does not force him to abstain from consuming the poison rather it impels him to abstain from it out of his own volition."(۱)

According to what has been said, even people like Abu al-Fadl al-‘Abbas (‘a), ‘Ali Akbar (‘a) and a great deal of the progeny of the Imams (‘a), even though they did not commit sin in the entire course of their lives, do not have the type of infallibility which is exclusive of the prophets (‘a), the Imams (‘a) and Fatimah al-Zahra’ (‘a). Of course, there is no doubt that the rank of such prominent people is higher than that of the rest of the people and they had a kind of infallibility, but it is also certain that they did not have the infallibility exclusively guaranteed to the prophets (‘a) and the Imams (‘a).

In conclusion, human beings can have practical infallibility in regard to abstaining from sin and can attain the station of the truthful if they have high objectives and embark upon edification, repression of carnal desires of the soul and strengthen their relationship with

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Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۱۱, pp. ۱۷۷-۱۸۹, third ed., Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah - ۱ .Publications

Allah. Therefore, people have to move along the path of spiritual perfection and inspire themselves to become truthful and righteous.

There is not the least doubt that if human beings make effort and attain the necessary capacities and befitting capabilities, Allah is by no means niggardly in granting high stations. Basically, Allah Himself encourages His worshipers to arrive at

lofty levels and Islam has urged the believers to have high ambitions. Allah wants the faithful to have high aspirations in this regard and not to be content with less. A believer ought to set his eyes on the station of the prophets ('a) and endeavor to .imitate them

If we cannot attain the station of the prophets ('a) and their infallibility, we can at least become truthful and righteous because the infallibility that is exclusively for the .prophets ('a) and the Imams ('a) is not a condition for those two stations

As has previously been stated, siddiq (sincere) denotes excessive truthfulness and honesty, that is to say a person who does not entertain lies throughout his or her life. A truthful person does not entertain lies in words, deeds or thoughts and does not .harbor wrong and indecent thoughts

The Importance of Sincere Faith and the Means of Attaining It

:In regard to the value of sincerity and truthfulness, the Noble Prophet (S) states

Sincerity leads to righteousness and righteousness guides to paradise, and man does" (not say the truth save that he is recognized to be sincere in the eyes of Allah."(١

Perhaps we may imagine that attaining sincerity in speech, thoughts and conduct is

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.Fayd Kashani, Muhajjah al-Bayda', vol. ٨, p. ١۴ -١

not a hard undertaking and we may believe that we can manage not to tell lies, not to nurture indecent thoughts in our minds and not to behave badly; however, the truth is that being honest is a very hard thing. We all claim to have faith in Allah and conceive Him to be present and seeing at all times, but do our words and deeds validate our ?claims

Sometimes we do deeds in private that would make us feel ashamed if a small child were present witnessing our actions, and we would never do those things in that case.

Now, how can we believe that Allah is present and seeing us and at the same time do ugly deeds? In reality, we perceive Allah to be less than a small child and we are not sincere in our belief. The taint of falsehood is in our belief. At the same time, we believe that if human beings obey Allah in the whole course of their lives, Allah grants them rewards for every second of their lives—rewards which are greater than the universe and everything that is in it, but are we honest in this belief and conviction? ?Does our conduct conform to this belief

If a person has a small bag of gold, does he aimlessly drop it in a well? Does an intelligent man ever do such a thing? Even if he only has one piece of gold, he hides it in a very secret place so as not to

p: ١٠٧

lose it or so that it may not become stolen. A person never easily loses material wealth and capital because he knows it is not a wise deed. Now, if we believe that the moments of our lives are more precious than jewels like diamonds, are we ready to let them easily slip out of our hands? Even supposing that we do not sin, do we not ?waste our lives pursuing many vain and worthless activities

If we truly believed that a reward higher than this world existed for every moment of our lives, we would not be willing to lose it for anything in the same way that we do not lose material things of the world without something in return. When we lose a hundred tumans,(١) we become worried out of our wits and even during recitation of our prayers we become preoccupied with thinking about how to find it. (During prayer some people involuntarily begin thinking about their lost items and easily remember (!things they have forgotten

If a person acquires wealth by means of a great deal of effort and endeavor, he is not willing to easily place that wealth at the disposal of others and he well knows its value because he has taken a lot of pains to acquire it, but it is possible for him to spend .hours of his life pointlessly without feeling the least loss

In other words, it is likely that a person is miserly in expending his material wealth, but

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.Iranian currency -۱

is not at all cautious in spending the moments of his life in spite of the fact that the value of wealth is clearly not equal to the value of a lifetime. Therefore, we are not really truthful to our claims of faith in the hereafter and heavenly reward which may be granted to us for every second of our lives because if we truly had sincere faith, we !would not spend our lives pursing vanity or, even worse, squander our lives in sin

In truth, our lives are mixed with these false claims. If, Allah forbid, this deceitfulness infiltrates our practical ways of life and words too, we can become afflicted by even :worse sin. In the Gracious Qur’an, Allah states

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللّهِ إِلاَّ وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

(And most of them do not believe in Allah without ascribing partners to Him.”(۱“

Perhaps in this Qur’anic verse Allah would like to make us understand the point that the faith of most believing people is intertwined with polytheism and thus not pure. If man only has one Object of Worship and is not polytheistic, there will never be room for carnal desires, worship of power and, in short, there will be no room for love of this world in his heart. The presence of all these vain inclinations and worldly affections is .a sign that that man has several objects of worship, not one

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَى بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ

.Surat Yusuf ۱۲:۱۰۶ -۱

مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ أَفَلاَ تَذَكَّرُونَ

Have you seen him who has taken his desire to be his god and whom Allah has led“

astray knowingly and set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and put a blindfold on his sight? So who will guide him after Allah? Will you then not take admonition?"(۱)

Yes, people who harbor carnal desires have set their sensual passions as their object of worship and are in fact polytheists. In truth, faith which is intermixed with carnal desire is not pure and is contaminated with polytheism. Of course, the faiths of different people are not intertwined with polytheism on the same level. Sometimes ninety nine percent of faith is mixed with one percent polytheism and at other times polytheism is so high that it completely destroys belief in Allah.

There is no doubt that we have all been contaminated by sin, but is it possible for a person who has spent all their lives in sin and vanity to decide to quit sin and become truly faithful and sincere in his beliefs? Beyond the shadow of doubt, this is possible and even after sixty years of living in sin and vanity, a person can become truthful if he firmly decides to, on the condition that he repents for his past and makes up his mind to spend the rest of his life obeying Allah. He has to conduct himself in a way that is pleasing to Allah; his sleep, his wakefulness, his association with people

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۱- Surat al-Jathiyah ۴۵:۲۳.

outside and with his family at home all have to be done for the sake of pleasing Allah. This is possible, but it is not to be attained in a short period of time and a person does not become sincerely faithful quickly. Sincerity is a habit that is attainable by means of long and continuous effort.

A person who makes up his mind to become a sincere believer after many years of living in sin has to strive very hard to acquire the habit of sincerity in the same precise meaning that we have explained. It is possible that an individual may have to practice and exert constant effort for two years before he can acquire the habit of sincerity, in which case if he becomes truthful his rank will be higher than the rank of one who practiced for one year to attain this level and the reward and recompense of a person who strove for four years is as well more.

In the same manner, the rank and reward of a man who spends even more years attaining sincerity of faith would be higher than that of the one who spends less time and effort, and certainly the rank of one who decides to be obedient to Allah from the time of puberty would have a higher rank than the rest of the people. He truly decides to traverse no other path save the way of Allah and to think of nothing except divine thoughts and not even imagine

.committing sin

It is hard for us to accept the point that man can arrive at a level where he does not even think or even imagine committing sin, but there have been people among our scholars who attained this station. They have narrated that the deceased Sayyid Radi and Sayyid Murtada, may Allah be pleased with them, wanted to recite congregational prayers. Sayyid Murtada—who was the elder brother of Sayyid Radi—wanted to allusively and implicitly tell his younger brother there was not the least doubt in his .being a just man and thus fully qualified to lead the congregational prayers

He addressed his younger brother, "The one between us who has not committed sin yet should lead the congregational prayers." He wanted to implicitly tell his younger brother that he had not committed sin since the days of his puberty. Sayyid Radi responded, "The one who has not imagined [or thought about] committing sin should .lead the prayers." That is to say, Sayyid Radi had not even imagined committing sin

Such an individual who has not contaminated himself with sin from the early years of his youth and has only set eyes on Allah and has always endeavored to discharge his .divine duties is without the least doubt not far from the station of the truthful

Lesson ٣٠: The Significance of Invocation of Allah, Constructive Social Interaction and the Criteria for Choosing Friends

point

This section of the Noble Prophet's (S) advice to Abu Dharr is related to socializing and

associating with other people. One of the issues which the scholars of ethics have mentioned in their books

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and about which there are differences, to a greater or lesser extent, is whether it is better in the viewpoint of Islam to associate and socialize with other people or seek seclusion and solitude. There are a great deal of hadiths in regard to the importance of socializing with other people, one of these is that Imam al-Baqir ('a) stated:

"At the time of his martyrdom, Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) called his children al-Hasan, al-Husayn, Muhammad Hanafiyyah and also his younger children and pronounced his last will and testament to them; at the end of his will, he stated, 'O my children! Associate with people in such a way that they will miss you when you are absent from them and cry for you when you die'."(1)

The scholars of ethics have also made mention of a number of benefits deriving from reclusion and solitude; benefits which appear to suggest that it is distasteful to associate with other people. In contrast, they have also alluded to the rewards of socializing with people and have enumerated harms resulting from solitude.

The Benefits of Reclusion and Solitude

Some of the benefits of reclusion and solitude which have been enumerated include the following:

a) Secluding oneself from the society helps a person find free time to worship, meditate about worldly and heavenly affairs, fall in love with invocation of Allah, conceive divine secrets and reflect about the wonders of Allah's creatures. Associating with people prevents man from procuring these superior graces. It has been said that it was due to the invaluable role

p: ۱۱۳

1- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۴۲, p. ۲۴۷.

of self-reclusion in edification of the soul that Prophet Muhammad (S) used to go alone to the mountain of Hira' at the threshold of his prophetic mission and would embark upon invocation of Allah and seclude himself from the people until the light of prophethood shined upon his soul and, after that, the people no longer prevented him .from Allah

Even though he existed physically among the people, his heart was constantly with Allah and invocation and remembrance of Him was always alive in his soul. Without the divine power of the prophetic mission and without attaining the station of proximity to Allah, man cannot strike a balance between association with the people .and constant supplication of Allah

b) As a result of seclusion from the people, man extricates himself from a great deal of sins, like ١) gossip and ٢) sanctimony, which usually occur on account of associating with people. The reason is that man becomes afflicted by ostentation and hypocrisy as a result of mingling with people. This occurs because the people will hurt or aggrieve a man who does not compromise with them and who makes up his mind to prevent them from ugly deeds and indecent speech. In contrast, he becomes afflicted with sanctimony once he compromises with them and quietly concedes to their ugly deeds. ٣) Silence in regard to bidding good and forbidding evil; ۴) not purifying the human nature and disposition from mean ethical qualities and indecent deeds which derive from ardent desire for the

p: ١١۴

.world. Ardent desire for the world itself is aroused on account of mixing with people

It is natural that when a person is not self-built and has not reached a level where he can harness and control his appetitive soul and restrain it from error, he commits sin whilst in a group; and most often conversation and associating with others provides .the background for becoming tainted by sin

c) It is for the purpose of liberating oneself from quarrels and disputes, protecting one's religion and restraining one's heart from social deception (because there are no

gatherings devoid of bigotry, hatred and animosity) that a person avoids groups and .assemblies and becomes immune from deviations

d) Freedom from harm from others: sometimes people aggrieve others by means of gossip. At other times they distress other people by way of being suspicious towards them, making false accusations or by means of covetousness. It is for this reason that when man abstains from the presence of other people, he becomes free from these issues, but he will not be free from the evil of their jealousies and enmity as long as he associates and socializes with people or takes part in their activities. At every moment sedition and intrigue is being plotted with the aim of striking a blow to him so as to .bring him down from his rank and status

e) Solitude and seclusion from the people results in man not coveting what other .people own and in other people not begrudging what he owns

Man's tranquility and comfort is guaranteed in severing people's grudges against him because man can never please everyone's expectations. It is for this reason that .embarking on edification of character is better than striving to please people

If man wants to discharge all of the people's rights such as burying the dead, visiting the sick and taking part in various ceremonies, he will spend much of his time and not fulfill his more important duties and if he decides to discharge some of his social duties and neglect others, those people whose functions he did not attend to will complain and not accept whatever excuses he has to offer. Thus, he feels indebted to people and this in itself is cause of enmity and ill-feeling. However, a person who completely .secludes himself from these issues is less likely to be entangled by them

f) A person who lives in reclusion and solitude is liberated from witnessing proud, stubborn and foolish people, all of whom cause irritation. A certain man was asked, "Why do you look sad?" He responded, "Because I was looking at the rich and the proud." Therefore, from the worldly perspective, witnessing the rich and the proud affects man in an undesirable manner and from the point of view of the hereafter,

man does not hesitate to talk about them in their absence once he has been vexed by them. In addition to that, once man has been hurt by other people's gossip, false accusation and jealousies, he does not

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hesitate to retaliate and all these result in the corruption of man's religion and faith; it is for this reason that a man who secludes himself from people remains safe from all .these calamities

The Benefits of Association and Coexistence with Others

point

A great deal of religious as well as worldly goals and needs are attained with the help of other people and cannot be achieved without association and coexistence with other human beings. Therefore, that which is attained by associating with other people is lost by reclusion and seclusion and it is natural that losing those benefits is one of the detriments of reclusion. With regard to what has been mentioned, some of :the benefits of associating with people must thus be enumerated

a) Teaching and learning from other people

The importance of teaching and learning from other people is very clear to everyone and is one of the superior forms of worship which cannot be attained except by mixing and associating with others. A person who chooses to live in reclusion and solitude is inhibited from the important duties of acquisition of knowledge and its dissemination and without the least doubt man is afflicted by irreparable losses and privations if he lags behind in religious and secular knowledge as a result of living in seclusion from .knowledgeable people and does not learn the divine laws

b) Deriving benefit from other people and helping other people

It is natural that deriving benefit from other people can only be attained by associating, affiliating and conversing with them and this is not feasible except by

mixing with others and a person who wants to derive benefit from other

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people cannot be a recluse and must have relations with people through coexistence with others. Of course, one's endeavors and deeds have to be carried out in the way .of Allah's pleasure

Helping other people or acting in their interests implies that an individual must do so by means of his property, through his actions and through his advice to solve the problems of others. In truth, rising to help other people has a lot of divine rewards and these divine rewards cannot be attained except by mixing and associating with other people. A person who can help other people bear their loads and solve their problems has attained great virtue and this cannot be achieved in solitude. A person who is in seclusion can only manage to perform personal worship like recommendable prayers .and other individual duties

c) Training and educating other people as well as self-edification

Self-edification and refinement of the soul denote endeavor and struggle to cure diseases of the heart and bearing with patience the bad habits of people and the harm they inflict for the sake of repressing the soul and controlling its carnal desires and appetites. This matter can only be achieved under the auspices of coexisting with other human beings. Constructive association with people is better than seclusion and reclusion for a person who has not yet embarked on edification of character and refinement of the soul and who cannot control the passions by observing divine .injunctions

Educating and training other people implies warning them about the consequences of ill deeds and restraining them from sinning

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in the same way that a teacher behaves with his student. The fruits of reclusion have to be compared with the results of associating with people before the best way of life

.can be selected

d) Friendship and affection with other people

This important issue is achieved by attending gatherings, socializing and fraternizing with other people. Of course, we ought to abstain from friendship and affection which results in doing prohibited deeds and make friendships on the basis of Allah's desires .and the injunctions of divine law

We should make friends with those who increase our perfection and knowledge, not those who cause us to waste time on vain pursuits and squander our material and spiritual aptitudes. Most often, a friend and companion play an important role in the attainment of prosperity and perfection or misfortune and villainy. It is for this reason .that one must take the utmost caution and care

:The Noble Prophet (S) states

A person plays a vital role in his friend's religion. Therefore, every one of you ought to" (be cautious with whom he becomes friends."(١

In regard to the importance of companionship with divine scholars, Luqman, the Wise, :thus told his son

O my son! Associate with divine scholars and be humble towards them. Verily hearts" become lively under the auspices of wisdom, in the same way that raindrops bring the (earth to life."(٢

e) To derive and bring divine reward

Another benefit of associating with other people is that man derives divine reward from being at their service and other human beings too gain divine reward from being .at the service of man

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٧۴, p. ١٩۴ -١

.Ibid., vol. ١, p. ٢٠۴ -٢

Deriving divine reward is attained by taking part in the burial rites of the dead, visiting the sick in hospitals, going to the homes of acquaintances and friends and taking part .in their sorrows and joys

Most often, these issues result in strong brotherly ties and making the hearts of Muslims cheerful and this in itself has a lot of divine reward. However, doing good deeds towards others even takes place when one's door is open to other people so that they may come to his home in times of hardship and loss to express their condolences and congratulate him at times of joy and celebration. All these things make other people derive divine benefit. In the same way, the people derive divine .benefit if a religious scholar opens his door to them so that they can visit him

f) Humility and modesty

The superior quality of humility and modesty arises in man as a result associating with other people and in all truthfulness this is one of the highest stations which man can attain and doubtless that it cannot be attained in solitude and seclusion because sometimes the result of reclusion is self-pride. A story has been narrated that there once lived a wise scholar who had authored three hundred and sixty philosophical works. As a result, he conjectured that he had attained a very high position in the eyes .of Allah

Allah inspired the prophet of his time to tell that wise man that he had filled the earth with hypocrisy and sorrow

and that Allah was not pleased with his literary works. After hearing this, the scholar chose to live in solitude and reclusion and distanced himself from the people and went to live in a hole underground and said to himself, "Now Allah has become pleased with ".me

Allah once again inspired His prophet to tell that scholar that He was still not pleased with him. Allah would only be pleased with him once he associated with the people and bore their injuries with patience. Thereafter, that wise man attached himself to the people and mixed with them in the streets and the bazaar and would associate with them and eat food with them until Allah finally inspired his prophet to tell that wise man that now He was pleased with him.

There are many people who have chosen to remain at home and seclude themselves from others and this same seclusion from people becomes a cause of pride. Again, this pride becomes a cause of their not attending social functions because they conceive themselves to be higher than the rest of the people.

g) Acquisition of experience

Experience is attained by associating with others because man becomes aware of the states, thoughts and deeds of people after becoming acquainted with their actions and the leaps and lapses which they have in the courses of their lives. As a result of this, he chooses the provisions he needs in order to traverse the correct path in life. With all certainty, innate intellect is not enough to comprehend the

advisable or expedient things of religion and the world on its own and experience helps it in this direction and someone who has not had enough experience cannot derive benefit from solitude and reclusion.

It has become clear from the previous discussion that solitude and reclusion cannot be denied in totality and associating with people at all times cannot be said to be entirely advisable, but the ruling or decision is dependent on the spirit and states of every individual and the spirit of his companions and the motive for friendship and companionship. In short, seclusion from people causes enmity and hatred and excessive mixture with them can result in bad deeds; therefore, man ought to observe moderation between solitude and association with others.

Without the least doubt, whatever Allah, the Exalted, has created—ranging from the mountains, the valleys and the seas to man and the animals—all are blessings. In technical terms, this cosmos has a coordinated order and its components are in relation and harmony with each other. In truth, a perfect order rules over the universe and everything is exactly where it must be and all creatures derive benefit from one another as a result of the close relationships which exist among them.

According to this principle, human beings have to be useful to one another and help one another to move in the direction of the aim for which Allah, the Exalted, has created them; and that goal is termed 'perfection'. From another perspective, although Allah, the Exalted, has

p: ١٢٢

principally created human beings to be blessings to one another so that they can traverse the course of perfection, man is able to change these blessings of Allah into calamities and villainy because he is a free-willed agent. As Allah states:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ بَدَّلُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ كُفْرًا وَأَحَلُّوا قَوْمَهُمْ دَارَ الْبَوَارِ

"Have you not regarded those who have changed Allah's blessings with ingratitude, and landed their people in the house of ruin?"(١)

With regard to what has been mentioned, people can make themselves a blessing for other human beings in order for others to derive benefit from them or they can become a cause of trouble and problems for other people. Association, brotherhood and fraternity are among the greatest divine blessings in which Allah has placed particular grace; as He has stated:

... وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا...

"...And remember Allah's blessings upon you when you were enemies. Then He brought your hearts together, so you became brothers with His blessing..."(٢)

Therefore, the value of brotherly love and affection, which is a blessing of Allah, must be understood and also steps must be taken to strengthen this intimacy and a Muslim must try to be a helper, confidant and sympathizer of his Muslim brother and not to be the cause of his displeasure or become an oppressor to him.

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"A Muslim is the brother of his fellow Muslim; he is his brother's eyes, mirror and guide. A Muslim neither betrays a fellow

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۱- Surat Ibrahim ۱۴:۲۸.
۲- Surat Al 'Imran ۳:۱۰۳.

Muslim nor does he oppress him. A Muslim does not lie to his brother and does not gossip about him."(۱)

However, it cannot be asserted that association and social intercourse with all human beings is beneficial, and in contrast it cannot be said that socializing with people is entirely harmful so that man must not associate with anyone; therefore, certain criteria have to be taken into consideration by means of which constructive and productive socialization will be separated from unproductive and harmful fraternization. Man has to know with whom to associate in order to be helped in attaining divine and spiritual goals—man needs to distinguish with which people he ought to socialize in order to procure spiritual perfection as well as to be successful in carrying out his duties.

Man has to discern with which people to associate so as to be able to positively influence and constructively impress them because productive guidance of other human beings gives fruit to human perfection. A person himself achieves prosperity once he realizes his responsibility to help other human beings—whether materially or spiritually, and of course spiritual help is more valuable than material help—and undertakes the encouragement of others to perform their duties and guides them to

pursue the path of bliss and prosperity because he has worshipped Allah by means of .discharging his responsibilities and consequently has become more complete

In reality in this world, whatever service we do for other human beings, especially if that assistance is done with a correct and sincere

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۲, p. ۱۶۶ -۱

intention as well as according to divine legal criteria, we have actually done service to ourselves; that is to say, we have worshipped Allah and its reward will be granted to us. Therefore, social intercourse is invaluable for human beings if it becomes the cause of aiding others and/or deriving spiritual good from them and thereby becoming more focused on one's goals. Without doubt, socialization is beneficial if as a result of .it man's knowledge increases and his soul grows more complete

In contrast, social intercourse with people who not only do not remind man about Allah but also lead him towards negligence and invite him by means of their words and deeds towards spiritual collapse, moral decline and all sorts of deviation is neither desirable nor constructive. It is for this reason that not just any person should be chosen for friendship and intimacy. High qualities and valuable attributes have to be the criteria for selecting friends and companions and of course the prominent qualities of a friend and companion have the most beneficial effects. Sometimes perhaps there are worldly and material benefits such as wealth and position to be derived from friends, but the best rewards to be derived from friendship are religious .blessings

The Criteria for Choosing Friends and Associates

In regard to the hardships of selecting suitable friends and the positive and negative influences of good and bad friends, Islamic sources have topics specially dedicated to explaining the criteria of choosing companions, and the saints [awliya'] of Allah have enumerated the attributes and qualities of

suitable friends. One of the instances where the qualities of a suitable friend were expounded was when the Noble Prophet (S) was asked in regard to who the best associate was. He responded:

"The best friend is a person whom looking at reminds you about Allah, whose words increase your knowledge and whose deeds remind you about the hereafter."(۱)

Or when the companions of Prophet Jesus ('a) asked him with which people to associate, he responded:

"Associate with a person whom looking at reminds you about Allah, whose deeds make you desirous of the hereafter and whose knowledge increase your logic and intelligence." Then he also commanded them, "Become close to Allah by abstaining from sinners and become friends with Allah by making enmity with evil-doers and please Allah by annoying the iniquitous."(۲)

The Gracious Qur'an quotes a man who met with calamity as a result of deviating from the right path and the way of the prophets of Allah and thus oppressed himself and on this account became caught up in the fire of divine wrath and bit his fingers in regret and sorrow, saying:

يَا وَيْلَتَى لَيْتَنِى لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ فُلاَنًا خَلِيلاً * لَقَدْ أَضَلَّنِى عَنْ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَنِى وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِلإِنسَانِ خَذُولاً

"Woe to me! I wish I had not taken such a one as a friend! Certainly he led me astray from the Reminder after it had come to me, and Satan is a deserter of man."(۳)

This kind of verse denotes the fact that one of the causes of becoming misled

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۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۱, p. ۱۸۶.

۲- Ibid., p. ۱۸۹, hadith ۱۸.

۳- Surat al-Furqan ۲۵:۲۸-۲۹.

is unsuitable friends and companionship with those who are misled; therefore, a believer ought to abstain from unsuitable friendships and refrain from unhealthy gatherings. Of course, people are not the same: some individuals are so built and have such strong wills that they do not fall under the influence of other people no matter what the circumstances but instead influence those around them, but there are others who are influenced by whoever they associate with as a result of weak determination and shaky faith and are easily impressed by the conduct and morals of those around them. Therefore, man has to be cautious with whom he associates and who influences him. Those who are stronger, even if they are not influenced by other people, have to observe from whom they derive more benefit and set priorities in their social intercourse.

Therefore, in whatever condition, if we are in a group of people who remind us more about Allah and the hereafter, increase our knowledge, encourage us to do more good deeds, act in the service of other people, and we easily find ourselves traversing the right path as a result of their help, such association is certainly correct and productive; however, in other than this case association with people could produce undesirable and bad results. Therefore, it cannot be asserted that all assemblies are definitely good and man has to go into every gathering and associate with every person on the pretext that amiability and amicability are good; in reality man

deceives himself with such fanciful thoughts.

Association with every person is not beneficial—most often a person initially enters a gathering with a pure intention and thereafter comprehends that association at that place is not in his interests because the people present are gossiping, lying, talking vanity, making obscene jokes and encouraging him to be a mammon, or their conduct is such that it attracts a person to the world and makes him heedless of the hereafter. In this case, one ought not to take part in the gathering on the pretext of amicability and amiability unless he has such spiritual strength that he can influence the others and unless despite knowing that their conduct is indecent, he still is sure that he can

guide them with advice and admonition. Such association, which is an instance of bidding the good and forbidding the evil and encouraging others towards what is .right, enjoys special importance in the divine law of Islam, is desirable and productive

:In a certain hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states

Be cautious with whom you talk, because a man's friends are brought together and" embodied before him once he dies; if they were good people, he is placed in the group of the good ones and if they were bad individuals, he is put in the group of bad (people."(١

Therefore, if the question is asked about what is advisable according to the Islamic point of view, whether socialization with people or seclusion from them is preferable, :the response would be thus

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۴, p. ۴۵١ -١

it is not true that keeping company with people is advisable in all instances nor that solitude and reclusion are undesirable, but secluding oneself from a person who encourages man to sin and causes one to deviate from the right path, separation from a person who causes man's faith to become weak, dissociation from a person .who incites polytheism and doubt in man's inner soul is very proper and necessary

On the other hand, abstaining from socialization and adopting solitude deprives man of social issues and graces which Allah has allotted to man in the different arenas of man's social life and prevents man from discharging his communal duties. In reality, the negative effects of solitude are that it becomes a cause of leaving aside a great deal of incumbent duties. Man is held back from acquiring knowledge and other perfections which can only be attained under the auspices of social life. He becomes dispossessed of healthy ethics and habits as well as the material and spiritual help of other human beings which are beneficial for him in this world and the hereafter. If it were a basic principle that every person ought to live in solitude and busy oneself with

worship in seclusion and not associate with other people, a lot of the social laws of Islam would be suspended and abandoned. It is for this reason that both solitude and socialization are advisable in their proper instances.

Living in reclusion is not automatically advisable, except for the sake of performing

acts of worship with the intention of keeping aloof from sanctimony and for the sake of having more attention and concentration and so that day to day encumbrances and association with the people do not become an impediment for worship which must be done either in solitude or at night because the night is a suitable opportunity for worship and invocation of Allah since man finds time to meditate about himself after being relieved from daily duties and dedicate his heart to the remembrance and invocation of Allah. Allah states:

إِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ اللَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُّ وَطْأً وَأَقْوَمُ قِيلاً * إِنَّ لَكَ فِي النَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيلاً

"Indeed the rising by night is the firmest way to tread and the best corrective of speech, for indeed during the day you have drawn out engagements."(۱)

Man ought not to pick up the rosary during the day and sit in a secluded corner busy glorifying the Lord, but he has to be engaged in the social functions of people and discharge his duties alongside them. There will not be teaching and learning as well as no preaching and admonishing if we avoid socialization and association with the people by sitting alone in a room at home or spending all our time alone in a mosque; likewise, calling towards righteousness and helping of the poor and needy will not be feasible by living in seclusion from the people.

Even worse, political duties on the local and international arena and helping the rest of the Muslims who live

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۱- Surat al-Muzzammil ۷۳:۶-۷.

in other Muslim countries will not be discharged. On the other hand, man ought not to think that because these good blessings and virtues are found in socialization with the people, every gathering and mixing with every person in any form imaginable is advisable; such thoughts result in the deviation and misguidance of man. As has previously been explained, man has to try to observe divine expediencies and the legal aspects of socialization so as not to be prevented from his main goal of eternal .bliss

:Imam al-Baqir (‘a) thus advised one of his companions by the name of Salih

Follow a person who makes you cry and gives you instructional advice, and do not“ follow one who makes you laugh and deceives you; verily soon you will meet Allah and you will be aware of your deeds.”(۱)

The Greatness of Invocation of Allah while among the Heedless

If man unfortunately finds himself in a group of people who are negligent of the hereafter and inattentive to Allah, what ought he to do in order to remain safe from being contaminated by sin? If he leaves the group, they will not react decently towards him, and most often they wrongly conceive that he fancies himself as being .purer and higher than they are

According to Islamic ethics, man ought not to perceive himself as better than other people and his deeds too ought not to leave such an impression on others. As the Noble Prophet (S) stated to Abu Dharr in one of his pieces of advice which has :previously been discussed

Man does“

.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۴, p. ۴۵۱ -۱

not attain the level of religious scholarship unless he conceives all human beings vis-à-vis Allah, the Exalted, as camels devoid of comprehension and thereafter look at

himself and perceive himself as lower than the rest of the people.”

Even a righteous man ought not to conceive himself as higher than a corrupt human being; all too often it occurs that a corrupt man repents and his sins become forgiven while that believing man remains self-contented with his acts of worship thus becoming afflicted by pride and self-conceit which cause his perdition!

Therefore, sometimes there exist conditions which necessitate that a person ought not to seclude himself from the community in order that he may not react negatively and so that he may not bear ill thoughts in regard to others. In addition to that, sometimes it is necessary to remain in a group of sinners and evil-doers in order to enjoin the good and forbid the evil as well as to warn them about the ill consequences of their deeds; for this reason, presence among them is a means of bidding righteousness and forbidding sin.

However, things do not always happen in this way. That is to say, sometimes a group of people are not doers of good and benevolence, but they are negligent and speak vanity; nonetheless, they do not commit sin and do not do forbidden deeds. They act in such a way that admonishing them is not incumbent. In regard to this group of people, the Noble Prophet (S)

p: ۱۳۲

states:

“O Abu Dharr! A person who invokes Allah among the negligent is like a person who continues to fight after everyone has run away from the jihad.”

In the case that man is in the midst of negligent people from whom he does not derive benefit and reward, he ought to try to make his heart attentive to Allah, the Exalted, in order to be like a person who remains alone on the battlefield fighting and resisting the enemy after everyone has fled from the jihad. It has previously been said that Allah boasts to the angels and takes pride in a person who remains alone on the battleground fighting and resisting the enemy after everyone has taken flight.

Likewise, Allah, the Exalted, takes pride in a believer whose heart is permanently attentive to Allah whilst in a group that is negligent of Him and preoccupied by mean .worldly affairs which are not pleasing to Allah

Man's Responsibilities regarding His Speech

O Abu Dharr! A good companion is better than solitude and solitude is better than a" bad associate and good words are better than silence and silence is better than evil ".words

Naturally, the conditions for discussion are prepared when one associates with other people. What is better in this case—silence or speech? As we have already stated in regard to the principle of socialization and solitude, the criteria are various. Sometimes socialization is advisable and at other times solitude is better. In regard to .silence and talking as well, we do not have a stable measure

We ought to observe with what motive we speak. Talking is beneficial and good when it is done with a divine motive and for the sake of benefiting other human beings as .well as reminding them about Allah or for instruction of divine laws and issues

In any case, good speech is that which is made for the purpose of guiding and leading other people towards desirable perfection, whether it is directly in relation to spiritual perfection and to the hereafter or it is a prerequisite for attaining spiritual perfection and eternal bliss despite being related to worldly affairs because the intention of the speaker is to make the listener aware and show him the way of spiritual growth and ascendancy by way of material means and channels for the reason that man is impelled to make use of material means while traversing the path of humanity and perfection. However, when neither he nor other human beings derive benefit from his .speech, it is better for him to remain silent

What is interesting is that the word used in this hadith is 'dictation' [imla'], not 'speaking' [takallum]. Dictation denotes that once someone is talking, the other has to be writing and noting down what the speaker is saying. Whatever man says is not

dictation, because he does not always speak in order for the others to write down what he says. Therefore, why did the Noble Prophet (S) not say good talk is better than silence? There are two points which can

p: ۱۳۴

:be mentioned for using the term dictation

The first point: When man speaks, his words become recorded in the mind of the listener and it becomes one of the stockpiles of the listener's brain. Therefore, we have to be cautious what we record in the mind of the listener and the effects that remain in his mind. We have to mind that speaking does not only mean that we expel and utter words from our mouths, but that speech is the source of an effect and it can be said that when a person talks, the listeners are writing and noting down that which is being said in their minds. For this reason, man must be cautious in regard to what effects he produces in the hearts and souls of other human beings. If what he says is good, then his speech is proper and it leaves a good effect but if his speech is not good, why should he cause objectionable things to be recorded in the minds of other !?people

The second point: There are two angels recording whatever man says and that is why :the term dictation has been employed. Allah, the Exalted, states

إِذْ يَتَلَقَّى الْمُتَلَقِّيَانِ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ قَعِيدٌ * مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

When the twin recorders record [his deeds], seated on the right hand and on the left" (—he says no word but that there is a ready observer beside him."(۱

:Elsewhere, Allah states

كَلَّا بَلْ تُكَذِّبُونَ بِالدِّينِ * وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحَافِظِينَ * كِرَامًا

p: ۱۳۵

۱- Surat Qaf ۵۰:۱۷-۱۸.

كَاتِبِينَ * يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ

No indeed! Rather you deny the Retribution. Indeed, there are over you watchers,“ (noble writers; they are aware of what you do.”(1)

The Virtue of Sharing Food with a Believer and Abstaining from the Food of Corrupt People

O Abu Dharr! Do not befriend save a man of faith, nor share your food save with a“ ”.believing man, nor eat the food of the corrupt

In this section of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) initially mentions the issue of socialization and after that hints at some of its necessities. One of the necessities and effects of socialization mentioned was speaking with one another, now he mentions eating together with other people. The reason is that under the auspices of socializing with other people, man is obliged to eat with his associates. The Noble Prophet (S) .states that man ought not to associate and eat with anyone except believers

The first effect of eating the food of a corrupt man is being indebted and obliged to him. When a person is a guest of the iniquitous and he eats their food, in return, the sinful person also makes illicit demands which he expects the believer to fulfill. He .expects the believer to grant him certain improper favors

In contrast, when a person does not have any relationship with the corrupt and does not partake of their food, he does not become indebted to them and they cannot have any expectations from him. If one does not have any ties with the iniquitous, he rejects their illicit requests with utmost courage because he conceives their

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.Surat al-Infitar ٨٢:٩-١١ -١

requests as lying beyond the realm of his duties. From another point of view, there is .(no certainty that the food of the sinner is halal (permissible by divine law

There is no certainty whether the money with which he buys his food is halal or not

because he is not committed and devoted to the divine laws of Islam. There is no surety as to whether he has acquired that money by means of bribery or not. Man can have complete trust in a believer that he has earned his income in a lawful manner but he cannot have the same confidence in a sinner. Most often man partakes of the .sinner's food and later finds out that it was not acquired in a legitimate manner

In addition to what has been mentioned, and as can be derived from certain hadith, dubious food leaves negative effects in the soul of a person even if the person that eats it is not aware that the food he has eaten was not halal. In this regard, prominent scholars have narrated surprising stories. It is said that one of the scholars told his wife that he felt as if he was eating the rotten meat of an animal which had died on its own. His wife became surprised at her husband's words. She embarked upon investigation and found out that an animal had fallen in the well from which they used to draw water in Najaf during those days and they were drinking

p: ١٣٧

water from that well unaware that it was impure and contaminated. That great !scholar felt the natural effects of that water on his soul

Some of the great scholars never used to accept certain invitations to social gatherings and did not have a habit of eating whatever was offered to them. There is a famous story in regard to a man called Karbala'i Kazim who miraculously and by the special grace of Allah had memorized the Noble Qur'an. During the early days of religious studentship, he used to come to the Madrasah we were residing in as .boarders called Hujjatiyyah

There the religious students used to test him in order to see whether he had truly memorized the Qur'an or not. Karbala'i Kazim was a very surprising memorizer of the Qur'an. He could even recite the Qur'an in reverse order, from the end to the beginning. He even used to know the number of full stops in the Qur'an. This man would not attend just any social gathering he was invited to; however, he would attend some invitations and refuse others. He used to say that after attending some social gatherings, he would feel a heaviness and darkness in his heart that was not

there before attending those gatherings. (This story is doubtless beyond our conception, but it is true).

The late Ayatullah Haj Aqa Murtada Ha'iri, may Allah be pleased with him, narrates that he had placed a book mixed with verses of the Qur'an and non-Qur'anic words in front of

p: ۱۳۸

Karbala'i Kazim. Karbala'i Kazim was an illiterate man who could not tell the difference between one letter of the alphabet and the other, but he used to place a finger over the words and tell which one was a verse of the Qur'an and which one was not. Aqa Ha'iri said to him, "How do you manage to distinguish the verses of the Qur'an despite being unlearned?" He responded, "The verses of the Qur'an have the light and I distinguish them by means of that light." Yes, such realities exist and we cannot deny them just because of our incapacity to perceive them.

We should try to associate with and to eat with pious people as well as to use the property and accept the gifts of faithful people. Likewise, man has to try to use whatever wealth Allah grants him in the best possible manner because it is a divine blessing. If one buys food with his money, he has to give that food to a man of faith and belief in order for his deeds to be pleasing to Allah and so that, in addition to being eaten, it becomes a cause of establishing a divine connection—not so that the eating and reception become a cause of vanity.

"O Abu Dharr! Give your food to a person whom you love in the way of Allah and eat the food of a person who loves you in the way of Allah."

People should give food to a person and also eat the

p: ۱۳۹

food of a person with whom they enjoy a relationship of friendship and intimacy and that friendship has a divine root and source. When man gives food to someone, it is clear that he loves that person, but we should observe whether he loves that person

?for the sake of Allah or for other causes

The Noble Prophet (S) advises us to hold gatherings for the sake of Allah so that we may derive the best benefit from them and strengthen divine relationships between people. So often the relationship between people becomes strengthened by means of get-togethers and as divine love grows among Allah's servants, the ranks of the believers also grow; in contrast, if love is not divine and is instead evil, its growth .becomes the cause of man's fall

In addition to the orders to observe the outward laws of halal (permissible) and haram (forbidden)—which are among the emphatic injunctions of divine law—the saints [awliya'] of Allah used to observe more delicate and sensitive issues and used to recommend those same issues to their friends because discharging the wajib (obligatory) and abstaining from the haram (forbidden) is not enough for the growth and ascendancy of man and discharging these duties is only the first step (though unfortunately most of us have contented ourselves with this step). A believer has to have high ambitions and not imagine that he has arrived at the final destination by observing the wajib and haram, but has to know that the second step is

observing the legal etiquettes and the recommendable acts of divine law some of which have been mentioned, amongst them the etiquette of socializing, the etiquette .of speech, the etiquette of eating and amiability and abstaining from dubious acts

After traversing this stage and taking the second step, there still remains a long way to go for one to attain human perfection. He has to scrutinize the intentions of his heart and see what things he harbors in it. What are the motives of his conduct? Even .if he does a good and commendable deed, he has to observe what his intention is

Finally, inspecting the heart and scrutinizing the soul are among the levels of man's perfection and one whose outward deeds have not yet been purified and cleansed have not attained that level yet. The last level is that the saints [awliya'] of Allah try to concentrate their hearts only on Allah and to make their hearts the manifestation of

Allah's love. Their hope is in Him and they fear none but Him. They live in such a way that it seems as though they have nothing to do with anyone save Allah despite the fact that they associate with everyone and talk to other human beings and attend to .their social lives

In the Hadith al-Mi'raj(۱), in regard to the soul of the believer who has been guided to :the divine presence, Allah states

That soul will be asked, 'How did you abstain from the world?' It will respond, 'O my"

.Asecnt of the Holy Prophet (S) to heaven -۱

Lord! By Your glory and Honor, I have not conceived the world since I was created but (instead was always afraid of You'."(۱

That believer is not aware of the world because his attention is only focused on Allah .and he is unaware of issues which are not related to Allah

We too can attain those levels if we strive hard to strengthen our determination and embark upon edification of character and purification of the soul. We ought not to content ourselves with the outward aspect of our deeds or become proud with what .we have achieved and done so far but instead try to look into our hearts and souls

Lesson ۳۱: The Tongue, A Means of Guidance or Misdirection

point

This section of the sayings of the Noble Prophet (S) is related to the tongue and its control. Of course, in the previous lesson there was discussion regarding the need to control the tongue, but the present saying points out that man ought to take extra caution with regard to what he says. With regard to this point, it is important that we look in our books of hadith at sections especially dedicated to the manners of talking .and the etiquettes of the effects of utterance

Speech that is necessary and speech that is unadvisable and must be avoided have been mentioned. Before our presentation and examination of the advice of the Noble Prophet (S), it is appropriate to explain some issues in this regard. First, we will point out that the tongue is a blessing among the many blessings

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۷, p. ۲۷ -۱

of Allah and then we will enumerate some of the weaknesses and blights of the .tongue

Deriving Benefit from the Tongue and Other Members of the Body for the Purpose of Spiritual Ascension and Growth

All the gifts which Allah, the Exalted, has granted to man—whether they are physical and outward members, like the ears, eyes, hands and legs, or internal parts and whether they are immaterial qualities such as psychological and spiritual faculties, like the power of thought and imagination, which are related to the brain or the feelings and sensations of the soul; in short, that which is related to the soul and body of man —are all ways and means of attaining perfection and not goals in and of themselves. .Not even their results and effects are the ultimate goal of man

We should use the eyes to look at things which draw us closer to ultimate perfection and to Allah. In the same way, we have to listen with our ears to things which bring about human perfection and, in addition, use the rest of the members of the body— .one of which is the tongue—in the same way

We have to say things which bring about our spiritual ascension and are pleasing to Allah. We should use all the gifts of Allah with the purpose of gaining proximity to Him and to attain human perfection and we have to know that they are not just means of .sporting and games such that we can use our faculties in whatever way we fancy

Man should not conceive the results and desires of members of the body like the tongue as

his ultimate goals because the original aim is something much higher than these and speech is by far not the principal goal in man’s life. It is for this reason that the tongue has to be employed in the way of good and perfection. In a hadith, Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) :states

The charity of the tongue is giving advice to the Muslims and awakening the“ (negligent as well as glorifying and invoking Allah much.”(۱

Talking is a means and because Allah’s goal in creating man is that he ought to attain human perfection and proximity to Him, he has to use the tongue to derive the best benefit, not to use it as a means of procuring misfortune. He has to speak with wisdom and refrain from words which result in social and spiritual decline because a person’s words are symbols of his personality and status. Therefore, if man speaks without deliberation and does not take the fruits of his words into consideration, he :reveals the inner essence of his self. As Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states

(Speak so that you may be known, since man is hidden under his tongue.”(۲“

Elsewhere, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) enumerates the ill effects of vain speech and the lack of :thought in regard to the fruits of the words of the hypocrites

The hypocrite speaks whatever comes to his tongue, without knowing what is in his“ (favor and what goes against him.”(۳

:In contrast to a believer who

.When a believer intends to say something, he thinks it over in his mind“

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۹۶, p. ۷ -۱

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۴۳۲, pithy aphorisms ۳۹۲, trans. Shahidi -۲

.Ibid., p. ۱۸۴, sermon [khutbah] ۱۷۶ -۳

(If it is good he discloses it, but if it is bad he lets it remain concealed."(۱)

Although we may generally know that we have to gain proximity to Allah by means of the tongue, the subject of discussion revolves around the manner of gaining this proximity. In this regard, it has to be explained that words and speech sometimes fall in the category of worship of Allah, such as the words man utters at the time of supplication and ritual prayer where the words are considered to be either obligatory .or recommended acts of worship

However, in other uses of the tongue are means of making others know what he has concealed within his heart and make them know his desires and intentions. In making others know his desires, man should have divine intentions. He has to know what issues and what speech is pleasing to Allah and this can result in him becoming closer to Allah and can be a cause of gaining His reward in the hereafter. It is in this case that .a person attains divine wishes by means of using his tongue and speaking

In some instances, the advisability and desirability of words has to be distinguished by the help of the divine law of Islam, otherwise a person himself does not know the .bounds and characteristics of desirable talk

In a lot of instances one can discern the goodness of his speech by means of the intellect and comprehend whether what he says is desirable, incumbent or

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۱- Ibid.

recommended. In case man has the intention of pleasing none but Allah, his words are considered to be worship. An example is when one wants to defend an oppressed man by means of his speech or exact justice on behalf of an oppressed person by .taking an oppressor to task

This instance is a case of "intellectual independence" wherein the intellect is not dependent on the dictates of divine law. If no divine law had ever been inspired to

mankind, man would still have comprehended that defending the weak and oppressed was incumbent and if one were able to defend the oppressed by means of speaking, then that would be pleasing and gratifying to Allah. Even if one were not able to fully comprehend the obligation of speaking out in defense of the weak and .oppressed, he would at least conceive its goodness and desirability

We all know that it is very good and desirable to stroke the head of an orphan and make him happy and that abating the sorrow and sadness of a believing brother is good. In such circumstances, man's deeds are considered to be worship if he makes the intention to please Allah. In contrast with these situations, in other instances we may not realize the limits and cannot distinguish the realm of the permissibility of certain actions and, like divine injunctions, the lawmaker has to explain them to us. Even though the intellect may conceive the generalities, the characteristics, conditions and limits of those instances are

p: ۱۴۶

determined by divine law and they are placed at our disposal by means of inference .from the sources of Islamic jurisprudence

Therefore, in such instances we must follow divine injunctions. There are also instances which we know are not pleasing to Allah. Acting upon such deeds is not correct, man sins if he does these forbidden actions, he will be punished and because these deeds are not pleasing to Allah, they cannot be discharged with the intention of .worship

The wisdom of these instances is independently distinguished by the intellect and there is no need to receive the injunctions from the divine legislator. Examples are vexing other people by means of the tongue, lying, false accusation, and spoiling relationships between two believers by means of what one says all of which are .detestable and hated by the intellect

We conclude that we ourselves clearly conceive the goodness and badness of some of our words and in other instances divine law explains the limits and requirements of

.correct and proper speech

Method of Deriving Benefit from the Tongue and Avoiding Troubles It Causes

We have to bear in mind that the tongue is one of the greatest gifts of Allah and one of His most delicate of creations. Even though its size is small, its devotion or evil can be great because disbelief and faith are made apparent by means of it and these two are the utmost limits of obedience and disobedience. It is for this reason that effort has to be made to control the tongue because leaving it free can result in

p: ۱۴۷

.a lot of harm

A person remains safe from the calamities of the tongue once he controls it by means of divine injunctions and laws. He must never leave it free to utter whatever the heart desires but only that which is necessary for the worldly life and hereafter, and he must try to hold his tongue in instances where he senses worldly danger or danger in regard to the hereafter. The tongue is the biggest means of the devil for deceiving and misleading man; it is for this reason that silence has been praised in hadiths. As :the Noble Prophet (S) states

"Every person who keeps silent attains redemption."(۱)

:In another hadith, he states

"The faith of man does not become firm until his heart becomes resolute and his heart does not become resolute until his tongue becomes unwavering."(۲)

The tongue has to be controlled against defects such as lies, false accusation, gossiping and other such things and made to utter decent and acceptable words so that harm does not arise from it. Words have to be spoken where befitting and problems resolved by means of speech, so that man might build a palace for himself in paradise. Still, if a person, who is able to amass invaluable treasures, amasses straw instead, he has made regrettable losses. This is the similitude of a person who

quits invocation of Allah and embarks upon deeds that do not earn him any benefit. Even though his words do not constitute sin, because he has lost that

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۷, p. ۹۰, hadith ۲ -۱
.Ibid., vol. ۷۱, p. ۲۸۶ -۲

which is procured by invocation of Allah, he has incurred losses. Imam al-Sadiq ('a) :quotes the Noble Prophet (S) in regard to the attributes of the saints [awliya'] of Allah

The saints [awliya'] of Allah enjoined silence upon themselves and their silence was" invocation of Allah, they looked and their looking was taking lesson, they spoke and their words were wisdom, they associated with the people and their socialization was (a blessing."(۱

It is in view of the role of the tongue in bringing about either prosperity or everlasting misfortune and even more important its function in edifying the community or ravaging the ethical foundations of a society that Allah and His saints [awliya'] have made a great deal of recommendations that people must endeavor to control their tongues and, through awareness of correct social etiquettes and Islamic conduct and by making the saints [awliya'] of Allah and their speech and behavioral manners their role models, use their tongues to build themselves and the society. It is for this reason that the best way to control the tongue and use it is observing the speech etiquettes .(of the prophets and the saints [awliya'] of Allah ('a

The prophets ('a) used to show the best way of socializing with the people, an example of which are the logical proofs and demonstrative arguments which they used to have with the unbelievers that are recorded in the Gracious Qur'an; likewise, discussions they had with the believers and the detailed ways of life narrated from .them

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۳۳۳, hadith ۲۵ -۱

we delve deeply in the discussions the prophets ('a) had with the polytheists and the defiant, we cannot find anything insulting, offensive or humiliating that they said to the infidels. Indeed, in spite of all the opposition, insults, mockery, derision and ridicule that the unbelievers used to heap upon them, they always responded with the best and most well-intentioned counsels and advice and always took their leave with .peace

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلاَمًا

The servants of the All-beneficent are those who walk humbly on the earth, and" (when the ignorant address them, say, 'Peace!'"(۱

In spite of all the hurtful words, false accusations and derisions which the polytheists would utter to the prophets ('a), and the Qur'an has narrated them, it has not been recorded anywhere that the prophets ('a) ever responded in kind. On the contrary, .they used to respond with decent talk, articulate logic and good manners

Truly, these great people conformed to the method of education that taught them the best manner of speech and behavior and of these teachings is the following, which :Allah, the Exalted, ordered upon Moses and Aaron

اذْهَبَا إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى * فَقُولاَ لَهُ قَوْلاً لَيِّنًا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى

Let the two of you go to Pharaoh. Indeed he has rebelled. Speak to him in a soft" (manner; maybe he will take admonition or fear."(۲

One of the manners of speech of the prophets ('a) is that they always considered themselves as part and parcel of

.Surat al-Furqan ۲۵:۶۳ -۱

.Surat Ta Ha ۲۰:۴۳-۴۴ -۲

the people and used to talk with everyone according to their own level of understanding, and this truth can be deduced from the conversations which they had with different people as has been recorded in history. A hadith has been narrated by both the Shi'ahs and Sunnis that the Noble Prophet (S) stated:

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The basis of our work as prophets is to talk to people according to their intellects

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"

(۱)

Abstaining from Talkativeness and Excess in Humor and Joking

Our discussion concerns the defects and detriments of the tongue and there are numerous hadiths recorded in this regard. Religious jurisprudents have assigned certain topics of Islamic jurisprudence [fiqh] to the inviolable things [muharramat] in regard to speech, including lies, gossiping, ridicule, tormenting a believer, as well as vain and extravagant talk which has become known as lahw al-hadith—talk which separates man from Allah and diminishes the spirituality and divine light of human nature (in books of ethics there are detailed discussions explaining this matter).

The thing is that in some instances, the condemnation and unlawfulness of certain deeds is clear to man; therefore, man harbors no doubts with regard to their religious decrees in speech and deeds. However, sometimes certain words appear to be permissible and man even imagines that they are advisable when they are in reality forbidden or unadvisable. In such circumstances, the devil deceives us and we fall into error, whether knowingly or unknowingly, and as a result say those dubious and erroneous words. Sometimes, also man himself lacks enough attention and deceives

.himself

If man reflects upon doubtful things

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱, p. ۸۵, hadith ۷ -۱

in regard to what is good, he usually perceives the truth of the matter, but he unfortunately does not often pay careful attention to these things because he acts out of whims and does not take care in his deeds. He even makes excuses for himself .and even calls his deeds good and justifies them as well

For example, a joking jester who wants to liven up a gathering and make other people laugh makes excuses for himself that tonight is a festival and he only intends to make people happy! On this pretext he embarks upon frivolous talk which has no spiritual or worldly benefits whatsoever, and does not have any other effects save wasting time .and even hurting other people

The word 'lahw' (frivolousness) denotes everything which prevents man from important and necessary work and 'lahw al-hadith' (vain and frivolous talk) is vain and extravagant talk which causes man to deviate from what is right and makes him preoccupied—like old superstitious tales and stories which tempt man to do indecent .and obscene deeds—melodies and music can also be instances of lahw al-hadith

:The Qur'an states

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ سَلاَمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لاَ نَبْتَغِى الْجَاهِلِينَ

And when they hear vain talk, they avoid it and say, 'Our deeds belong to us, and" (your deeds belong to you. Peace be upon you, we do not court the ignorant'."(۱

It has been recorded in "Majma' al-Bayan" that this verse was revealed in regard to Nasr ibn Harith. He was

.Surat Qasas ۲۸:۵۵ -۱

a businessman who used to travel to Iran where he would learn the old tales of the Iranians and later relate them to the Quraysh. He used to say, "Muhammad narrates to you stories about 'Ad and Thamud and I narrate to you stories about Rostam, Esfandiyar and Kasra." The people too would listen to his tales and not to the verses .of the Qur'an

We have to bear in mind that it is not only vain and comical talk which makes an unhappy believer cheerful, but also relation of a suitable hadith with the temperament of the heavy-hearted believer about the graces of Allah can thus cheer him or her up and release them from sorrow and sadness. We do not necessarily have to make a .person happy by means of vain or comical talk

There is no person who denies the goodness of making other people happy and joyous, and this is a point which has repeatedly been recommended in Islamic sources. However, the point here is that a person's words and speech should have positive value and spiritual worthiness so as not to waste other people's time and not .lose Allah's graces, one of which is the tongue itself, in vain and unrewarding pursuits

:Imam al-Baqir ('a) narrates that the Noble Prophet (S) stated

Every person who makes a believer happy and joyous has made me happy and" (joyous and verily every person who makes me happy has made Allah happy."(۱

In another hadith Imam al-Sajjad ('a) narrates that the Noble

.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۲۷۱ -۱

:Prophet (S) stated

The best of deeds in the eyes of Allah, the Exalted and Honorable, is making the" (believers happy."(۱

Sometimes, a believer becomes sad because of worldly affairs and sometimes on account of matters related to the hereafter. In any case, that sorrow and sadness inhibits man from activities and work and brings his faculties and powers to a halt. Therefore, he cannot make use of his capabilities and capacities because he has no peace of mind and lacks joy. If he studies, nothing is retained in his memory, and he .lacks presence of heart during prayer

In any case, he cannot concentrate on anything and he does not embark on doing anything. In this case, we have to try to redeem him from that sorrow and sadness and gladden him so that he may perform his acts of worship and other duties. Making him happy is both desirable and an act of worship if done with the intention to please .Allah

Sometimes, man deceives himself that the only way to make a believer happy and joyous is to narrate useless tales, speak vain and futile words and tell funny jokes to him forgetting that in that regard he can speak productive, logical and valuable words and he can bring the believer out of sorrow and sadness by means of reasonable talk. He can guide the believer and tell him that these sorrows and distresses do not remedy problems and only harm the brain and inhibit him from his work without

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.Ibid., p. ۲۷۲ -۱

.benefiting him in any way

A joker or jester starts telling funny jokes once he sees his friend sad, imagining that he will make his friend happy, negligent of the fact that only a bit of joking is advisable and excessive jesting is reproachable and blameworthy. Excessive jokes cause man not to take himself and other people seriously and to imagine that everything is for play and sport. Also, a lot of laughing gives rise to the spiritual death of the heart and blots out the seriousness and sombreness' of man. We notice that even the Noble :Prophet (S) used to joke, as he himself stated

"I too joke, but I joke about what is right."(1)

And in regard to the need to refrain from excessive laughter, he states:

"I swear upon Allah, if you were aware of what I know, you would cry more and laugh less."(2)

With regard to what has been mentioned, we have to try not to let joking and jesting go beyond advisable limits. Most often excessive jokes and funny stories made on the pretext of making people happy result in hurting, derision and, Allah forbid, false accusation and gossip about other human beings. Man is cheated and deceived by the devil that making a believer happy is a recommendable act and thereby perpetrates a sin like gossip. In addition to the fact that he himself becomes contaminated by sin by committing indecent deeds, he impels his friend to become tainted by sin by listening to gossip.

In any case, in

1- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ١۶, p. ٢٩٨.
2- Ibid., vol. ۵٨, p. ١٠٧.

a great number of situations the devil deceives man into committing sin as a result of vainly imagining that he is doing good and decent deeds. However, if man thinks well and uses caution, he conceives his mistake.

Sometimes though, a person does not perceive his mistakes no matter how carefully he thinks because a human being is not necessarily perspicacious and foresighted. In such circumstances, it is the duty of others to make him aware that his deeds are not appropriate and he can do better deeds to make believers happy in another form that is more appropriate and desirable.

The Diversity in Methods of Guidance

In order to make people aware of their displeasing acts, we cannot always derive benefit from the same methods. For people that do not have much knowledge about incumbent and forbidden things of religion and are not knowledgeable of religious sources such as the Qur'an and hadith, the worldly and heavenly ill-effects of sins such as gossip, lying and false accusation must be enumerated. They have to understand that gossip is similar to eating the meat of a dead brother, and other .facts

However, for people who are always preoccupied with the Book and the sunnah and sciences of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), there is no need to enumerate the ill-effects of these sins because they themselves are aware of them. However, they do have to be reminded about instances in regard to which they have become negligent. They have to be awakened and made aware that some talk, even

if it is done with a good intention, is unadvisable and not pleasing to Allah and can .result in harm

Indeed, in some instances, deeds are two-sided or ambivalent and it is a person's intention and motive which grants them the essence of decency or indecency. Sometimes, a deed is considered to be good if it is done with a good intention although the same deed can be considered to be a bad deed if it is done with a bad .intention because the value of every deed in the Islamic point of view is the intention

Often a person, unknowingly or out of negligence, does a bad deed with good intentions and in this regard he receives a reward due to his good intention or at least if he is not rewarded he is exempt from punishment. On the other hand, if he carries out a good deed with a ignoble intention, he does not gain any reward and he has not performed any worship and would most probably be punished for that act because his deed was not done out of good intentions. Such instances can be found in a lot of .sayings

Sometimes, discussion arises in a group in regard to a certain person and someone

from the group intends to talk about the good traits of that individual and, in order to please that individual, he embarks upon flattering and improperly complimenting that person. If the others ask why the person is flattering so and so, he responds

p: ۱۵۷

.that he intends to be endowed with humility as a result of praising other people

Of course, one of the excellent qualities of man is that he should enumerate the good qualities of other human beings and try to mention the virtues of other people—this point has been recommended in the hadiths. By doing so, we increase the repute and prestige of a believer and we also encourage others to do good deeds and acquire good traits, but we have to observe the intention we employ when we praise other people. Is our praise for the sake of honoring a believer, pleasing Allah and bidding the good in the society or do we praise others in their presence and absence so as to ?earn their pleasure and subsequent favors

If we compliment a person with the intention of earning his pleasure and favors, he may praise us in return and grant us favors in times of our need. In such circumstances, we have done nothing but become deceived by the devil—we have praised our friend in his absence so that he may praise us in our absence. It is in these .circumstances that knowledgeable and informed people are deceived by the devil

The devil impels ordinary and unlearned people who are not aware about divine injunctions and laws to tell lies and gossip openly and commit well-known and defined sins, but he deceives the scholars in another form. He makes them imagine that if ,they embark upon reciprocal praise of one another

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they have done something good. This in reality is the result of the trickeries and .deceptions of the carnal soul

Therefore, man has to be cautious and examine his heart whenever he wants to do any deed in order to see what motive he has for doing that action. He has to reflect a

bit before doing anything and again after doing it. He should not let his tongue loose and free to utter whatever he wishes without any reflection and thought, because this .is a quality of fools who do not control their tongues and say whatever they desire

:In regard to the difference between a wise and foolish person, Imam 'Ali ('a) states

The tongue of the wise man is behind his heart, and the heart of the fool is behind his" (tongue."(1

:In explanation of this prominent saying, the late Sayyid Radi states

This is one of the most prominent and honorable sayings, and the intention of Imam" 'Ali ('a) is that the wise do not leave their tongues free to speak before they reflect and meditate in their hearts. In contrast, the ignorant gives precedence to saying whatever he wishes before thinking and contemplating. Therefore, it is as though the tongue of a wise man is behind his heart and the heart of an ignorant man is behind ".his tongue

Therefore, it is befitting that when talking, we have to initially ponder about why we want to talk and what our motive is so that by the grace of Allah, we may

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p, ۳۶۷, pithy aphorisms ۴۰, trans. Shahidi -۱

remain safe from the defects of the tongue, the deceptions of the carnal soul and the devil. However, if we do not think or take precaution in our deeds and we talk without reflecting and calculating, we will gradually fall into the devil's traps and unwillingly fall .prey to his deceptions and trickery

Of course, these errors which result from negligence, haste, lack of thought and reflection and not having the correct intention in doing deeds are not confined to words and speech. Man also falls into these errors with regard to deriving benefit from the other parts and limbs of the body but at present our discussion concerns the defects and faults which arise from the tongue and are directed at man and surely the

deviations and errors of the tongue are numerous and the dangers which arise from the tongue are more than those which result from the other parts of the body. We must remember to seek the pleasure of Allah when we speak, and not our own low .and defiled motives

In the first place, our speech must be pleasing to Allah and, in the second place, we have to have the right incentive when speaking; that is to say, there has to be both virtue in the deed and virtue in the doer. Both the mould and the framework of our talk must be correct and the contents and the aim of that talk have to be correct. In other words, the form as well as the

p: ۱۶۰

.meaning and purport have to be right

Many times over Imam Khomeini, may Allah be pleased with him, and other eminent scholars used to say: never does the devil tempt a religious scholar to liquor drinking or any ugly deed which is unsuitable to his status because in that case no repute remains for that religious scholar and he is never prepared to tolerate such danger and loss for himself. However, the devil compels religious scholars and the people of knowledge to deviations and slips which in their inner essence are even worse than .beer drinking

He obliges the scholar to do deeds which do not have an ugly outward appearance and no one reproaches him for doing that, but the damage and sin of that deed is great and most often man himself does not even conceive the greatness of the sin he !has committed and to what level he has [spiritually] fallen

For this reason, there is need to be cautious and embark upon controlling carnal desires and restraining our tongues so that we do not utter whatever word we desire and we must observe limits in our talk. We must not talk when there is no need to .speak

A Perspective on the Effects of Speech and Other Deeds

We have to bear in mind that once we get engrossed in talking, controlling the tongue becomes difficult. For this reason, we have to reflect about what we want to say before talking so as not to go beyond limits. If we do not control our tongues, when talk about

p: ۱۶۱

a particular subject arises in a gathering and others laugh as a result and thus .encourage more, it is very hard for a person to stop

Therefore, he jokes and jests in his frivolous talk and tries in every way, even by means of gossip, to make the others laugh. In reality, an uncontrolled tongue is like an unruly horse which is very difficult to control once its reins have been released. For this reason, people have to try to first control their tongues and ponder upon every sentence that they want to say. They must reflect upon whether what they want to say is proper or improper and refrain from excessiveness and extremism.

The Noble Prophet (S) and the saints [awliya'] of Allah ('a), in order to edify and train people, used to warn them to be accountable for their deeds and not imagine that they would not have to answer for them. We must not imagine that nothing at all has !taken place one hour after talking about whatever we fancy

On the contrary, every word that is released from our mouths is recorded, and every person will be held accountable as to why he says what he says and why he had a particular intention. Paying heed to this issue helps a person control his tongue; .otherwise, the carnal soul is strong and does not easily surrender

One of the ways by which the soul of a believer can be controlled is by making it realize that Allah, the

p: ۱۶۲

Exalted, is present everywhere, He listens to whatever we say and He will question every one of us in regard to what we have said. The Noble Prophet (S) has explained :this in this way

O Abu Dharr! Allah, the Honored and Glorified, is next to the tongue of every speaker."
".Therefore, the speaker has to fear Allah and be cautious about what he says

If man pays heed to the fact that Allah is present whenever he talks and his words do not remain hidden from Allah, he becomes cautious and does not utter anything he wishes. In addition to that, piety brings about fear of Allah, helps man control his .conduct and does not allow his tongue to produce words without great caution

Likewise, one of the ways the saints [awliya'] of Allah ('a) would employ to train their followers was to control their carnal desires through careful attentiveness to their surroundings and in this way encourage their followers to refrain from excessive or .out of place talk so that they talk only according to need and necessity

They used to encourage them to speak less and if they could let the listener know what they meant in two sentences, they should refrain from speaking a third sentence. Even if they wanted to explain an incumbent duty, such as 'enjoining good and forbidding evil' [amr bi'l-ma'ruf wa nahy 'an al-munkar], they should try to speak just enough to fulfill this aim and refrain from additional words; in this regard, the Noble

p: ۱۶۳

:Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Refrain from speaking unnecessary words. It is sufficient that you'
".speak only to fulfill your goal

Sometimes when a person is busy talking in a gathering, he utters superfluous or pointless words without attention—words which have no benefit either for this world or for the hereafter. He loses the irreplaceable capital of his life! Therefore, it is necessary for man to speak according to need and abstain from useless or :superfluous words. In one hadith the Noble Prophet (S) states

Blessed is he whose morals are good, whose attributes are pure, whose inner self is" decent, whose appearance is good, who spends his extra wealth in the way of Allah

(and who swallows his extra words."(1)

One eminent religious scholar says, "A believer is a person who first reflects before talking, and he speaks if he determines it to be advisable; otherwise, he keeps silent. However, the immoral and perverted one sets his tongue at complete liberty."

Indeed, excess in speech is one of the defects of the tongue which lowers the personality and social status of man and can become a cause of regret for him in the hereafter because once a person speaks without any control, whether he likes it or not, in addition to wasting time in talkativeness and vanity, he also commits sins of the tongue; therefore, he has wasted both the great capital of time and invited the wrath and anger of Allah.

The Need to Relate True Speech and Abstain from Spreading Rumors and Hearsay

In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"O Abu Dharr! In order to

۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۶۹, p. ۴۰۰.

lie, it is sufficient for a person to narrate whatever he hears."

One of the flaws of the tongue is that it should instantly narrate whatever it hears without investigation and research in regard to its correctness. Even if a person has no intention of telling a lie and only narrates what he hears without any additions or subtractions, his speech is nonetheless considered to be a lie because he has no certainty that what he says is correct or incorrect. For this reason, we have to refrain from outright intentional lies, because they are offensive, and also abstain from saying things we do not have certainty about.

We have to first of all inquire about what we hear and then only relate it once we are sure about its truthfulness.

The Noble Prophet (S) states that if a person narrates everything he hears, he will be considered a liar. In addition, sometimes we are not cautious in relating what we hear and often add or subtract to what we have heard when relating it to other people. We must be cautious not to recount everything we have heard when we talk because everything should not be repeated, and even worse is that we exaggerate and !embellish what we hear when recounting it to the others

With regard to the purport of falsehood which the Noble Prophet (S) has presented, spreading rumors and gossip is beyond the shadow of doubt a clear manifestation of lying. Gossip has been one of the weapons of the

p: ۱۶۵

.devil's forces against the leaders of religion

Whenever they rose up to guide mankind and to establish a sound and divine society, the enemies of Allah's religion would stand up against them with all the satanic means including lies, gossip and false accusation in order to disperse the people from the reformers and the divine leaders and consequently attain their evil objectives and .gains

By carefully studying history, we realize that in the early days of Islam too the enemies, in order to restrain the Muslims from supporting the Noble Prophet (S) and frustrate their endurance in the way of religion, used to make use of false rumors and gossip with the intention of creating fear and anxiety in their hearts. In this regard :Allah, the Exalted, states

وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوِ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ...

When a report of safety or alarm comes to them, they immediately broadcast it, but" had they referred it to the Apostle or to those vested with authority among them, (those of them who investigate would have ascertained it…"(۱

This blessed verse narrates the story of the minor [sughra] battle of Badr in which, after the war of Uhud and the insubordination of the Muslims to the Prophet's (S)

orders, the Muslims were losing the battle and consequently Allah aided the Noble Prophet (S) so much so that he triumphed over the polytheists in spite of having very few forces. Islam was saved from

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.Surat al-Nisa' ۴:۸۳ -۱

.definite extermination

The hypocrites, by enumerating the capacities of the enemy and recounting their victory at the battle of Uhud, wanted to incite doubts and uncertainty in the hearts of the Muslims and the companions of the Noble Prophet (S) and mislead the believers by means of their rumor mongering. Their aim was nothing but opposition with the .(Noble Prophet (S

It can be understood from this verse that when a report of safety or alarm comes to them, they immediately broadcast it that the hypocrites used to propagate fear and the Muslims would spread their rumors. It was nothing but nonsense which was being created by the infidels and their accomplices in order to create division and hypocrisy among the believers, but the people of weak faith used to spread those false rumors and did not understand that spreading such rumors would result in weakness and .vulnerability among the Muslims

After the Muslims sustained losses during the battle of Uhud, the Noble Prophet (S) constantly used to invite the people to take part in jihad against the infidels but some people were working to prevent the believers from jihad and from helping the Noble Prophet (S) and so they were spreading false rumors that the infidels had gathered very large forces and great armies; Allah warned them that all the false rumors and frightening of the Muslims were the work of the devil and the talk of Satan which was being produced on the tongues of his friends. After that Allah

made it incumbent upon the believers not to fear such machinations and only to fear Allah, the Exalted, if they had faith in Him.(1)

In today's world and especially in revolutionary countries and particularly in our country which has stood alone against all the hegemonic powers and is trying to protect its independence and guard Islamic and revolutionary values with all its being, there is a lot of rumor mongering and word-of-mouth relation of false stories. In order to create a split in the unity of the people and to make them pessimistic in regard to the goals and advances of the revolution, the hypocrites and counterrevolutionaries create and spread false rumors.

Unfortunately, once ignorant people hear these false rumors, they recount them with various motives. Perhaps they may not even have bad intentions in recounting those rumors, but when they sit next to their friends after long conversations, they have in any case narrated a number of false rumors.

Even if a person does not have any bad motives in narrating rumors, he has to observe whether recounting them has any benefit or not; in addition, he has to reflect as to whether that rumor has any basis or not. One should accept that it is likely that the person that has narrated that story is mistaken or that someone else has fed him with lies and false stories.

Therefore, before narrating any news, we have to carefully inquire whether it is right or not and speak with such caution and

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1- Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۵, p. ١٨, third ed., Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah Publications.

thought that once someone else hears our words, he becomes certain of its truth and says that there is no doubt in the words of so and so and whatever he says is true and he never speaks without deliberation.

A person should speak correctly and with deliberation so as to win the confidence of

others and attain a high and prominent reputation in the society as a result of telling the truth. If a person aims at attaining a good reputation, he has to try to earn the people's trust and confidence such that the people are impelled to say that so and so .does not talk without contemplation and his words are correct and truthful

Such a position grants him both worldly and heavenly reward. In the worldly point of view, the benefits of honesty and telling the truth are clear and in the heavenly point of view it results in the pleasure of Allah and man being granted lofty positions in .heaven

Therefore, we should not relate whatever we hear on the slightest pretext. If we disregard narrations that people often make about what they hear, in which they add or subtract something from it making uncalled-for changes, it is not even acceptable to explain every correct and true topic. Often it is not in a person's best interests to narrate what is right, because we might put the repute of a believer in danger and this is forbidden [haram] and a cause of Allah's wrath. In addition to

p: ۱۶۹

that, some rumors cause people of weak faith to lose hope and become pessimistic .about the Islamic system or the authorities

Therefore, we have to bear in mind some of the expediencies when narrating some stories. We have to observe whether recounting some news has benefits or not. One must ask whether the listener has the capacity to bear and take in the news or not. Furthermore, one must ask whether he will take caution when narrating news to other people. Does he recount news without additions and subtractions or does he add to it much more than that which is true and narrate it to every person and as a result of spreading that news the system weakens and the people's confidence and ?trust in the system and the leaders lessens

:In continuation of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) sates

".O Abu Dharr! There is nothing more worthy of being imprisoned than the tongue"

This is another instructional explanation from the Noble Prophet (S) which compels man to be more cautious of his words and to try to imprison the tongue in order not to utter words without deliberation. Some of the scholars of ethics used to state that Allah, the Exalted, has placed teeth in front of the tongue and he has placed lips in front of the teeth in order to imprison the tongue behind them.

Lesson ۳۲: The Manifestations of Venerating and Glorifying Allah

point

"O Abu Dharr! Venerating and honoring Allah the Blessed and High denotes revering elderly Muslims, respecting the bearers of the Qur'an and

p: ۱۷۰

those who fulfill its teachings and holding the just ruler in high esteem. O Abu Dharr! Every person that is bad-tempered is continuously becoming farther from Allah."

In this section of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) reminds us that honoring some of the servants of Allah is tantamount to venerating Allah. On the basis of their rational aptitude and to achieve certain goals, the wise sometimes liken something to something else or a certain action to another deed or they introduce an individual as similar to some other human being; in the same way that it is also said in conventional conversation that this deed is similar to that deed or that this person is like that other human being. This act of likening and juxtaposing is based on the similarity as well as joint aspect which exists between 'the subject of comparison' [mishabbah] and 'the object of comparison' [mushabbah bih].

The reason for this comparison and likening is that qualities and characteristics in one individual and/or deed may be concealed and covered up while that same attribute and feature may be apparent in the other individual and/or deed and, in order for that concealed and covered up quality to be recognized or distinguished as well as for the attention of other people to become concentrated upon it, it is introduced as similar to another thing and/or individual which has a more obvious feature and attribute.

,In conventional metaphors we see that a brave human being is likened to a lion

regardless that the level of bravery which is found in a lion is not found in man, but they liken that man to a lion for the reason that the lion is well-known for its courage. They do so with the intention of making that individual's concealed bravery known so that his courage will become completely apparent for other people and so that people's attention will be concentrated on him. This very attraction and concentration .of people's attention on him can have its own objectives and goals

In the verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths we come across a lot of expressions where individuals have been introduced as similar to Allah, the Exalted, and/or a deed which is done for people has been presented as a work done for Allah. For example, :giving a loan to the needy has been likened to giving a loan to Allah

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِى يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ وَلَهُ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ

Who is it that will lend Allah a good loan, that He may multiply it for him and [that]" (there may be a noble reward for him?"(۱)

This likening is done in spite of the fact that Allah, the Exalted, not only has infinite perfection, but, according to the accurate expression of some of the prominent religious scholars, has super-infinite perfection. A person who knows Allah and has faith in Him understands that Allah, the Exalted, has all the perfections in the highest .imaginable form

(The Uncomprehended Status of the Prophet (S) and the Pure Imams ('a

Not taking Allah, the Exalted, into account, there are

.Surat al-Hadid ۵۷:۱۱ -۱

amongst created beings those having completion although this completion is limited;

however, at times some of these perfections and their standards are disguised and .not completely understood by other people

Examples are the greatest and most perfect of human beings and creatures of Allah, namely the Fourteen Infallibles ('a), whose worthy prominence and extent of perfection is not completely known to others. It is for this reason that ordinary and .common people perceive them as similar to other human beings

Even some of the people who believe in the Noble Prophet (S) imagine that he was a person similar to other human beings, with the difference that he received divine inspiration, but they cannot conceive how much higher his standing and importance !are to that of other human beings

For people who know the loftiness of the Noble Prophet's (S) status, there remains no doubt that of all the prophets ('a) of Allah, he is the most superior, pre-eminent and perfect Prophet (S) and the divine legal code is his. Allah, the Exalted, raised him to the prophetic mission and inspired the Book to him so that he may judge on the basis of justice and equity and rise up upon the order of Allah and guide mankind upon the .right path

By means of logic and words appropriate to the people's intellect, he was charged with acquainting people with Allah, their interests in this world and the next, and completing their religion. In this regard, he presented manifest proof and demonstrative

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reasoning and would talk to every person to the extent of their intellect and understanding. In order for the community to become aware of the truth, he used to :provide logical proof and reason

... لِيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ وَيَحْيَى مَنْ حَيَّ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ...

So that he who perishes might perish by a manifest proof, and he who lives may live" (on by a manifest proof..."(۱

:In regard to the status of the Noble Prophet (S), Imam 'Ali ('a) states

Allah chose him from the family tree of prophets [the family of Abraham], from the" flame of light [the light of guidance and deliverance], from the forehead of greatness [from a family distinguished above others], from the land of al-Batha' [a noble and respected place], from the lamps for darkness [the ancestors of the Prophet were all like lamps of guidance for the lost] and from the sources of wisdom [the members of this family were believers and holders of the Book and others learned wisdom from (them]."(٢

:Elsewhere, Imam 'Ali ('a) states

His place of stay is the best of all places and his origin is the noblest of all origins in" the depositories of honor and the sanctuaries of safety. Hearts of the virtuous are captivated by him and the gazes are fixed upon him. Through him Allah buried mutual rancor, put out the flames of revolt, gave them affection like brothers and brought separation among some [like Hamzah and Abu Lahab]. Through his prophethood, He transformed the lowliness and suffering of

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.Surat al-Anfal ٨:۴٢ -١

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ٣٢١, sermon [khutbah] ١٠٧, trans. Fayd al-Islam -٢

the faithful to honor and eminence and degraded the infidels from greatness to (lowliness and misfortune."(١

On the basis of Allah's words and the sayings which have reached us from the Noble Prophet (S) and the Pure Imams ('a), we generally understand that those fourteen pure and divine lights have such high stations that even if all human beings were to put their intellects together, they would still not be able to comprehend their great .stations, let alone attain any one of them

This knowledge and awareness has been granted to us on account of the grace and

favor of Allah and by the grace of the verses of the Gracious Qur'an and the hadiths. It is because the Noble Prophet (S) possesses that high position and superior level that he is the best guide of Allah and after him also he has left two great heritages and legacies, the Book of Allah and his Pure Progeny [‘itrah] (‘a), and has advised his people to take refuge in them in order not to deviate. He, the Noble Prophet (S), :stated

I leave behind for you two precious items, the Book of Allah and my Ahl al-Bayt" (household). If you hold fast to them, you will never go astray and those two will never (be separated from each other until they meet me at the Pool [hawd] of Kawthar."(٢

The meaning of the two not being separated is that the Pure Progeny of the Noble) Prophet (S) will never ever do anything opposed to

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.Ibid., p. ٢٨٣, sermon [khutbah] ٩۴ -١
.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٢٣, p. ١٣٣ -٢

(.the book of Allah due to their infallibility

The Relationship between Obedience to Allah and Obedience to the Prophet (S) and the Ahl (al-Bayt (‘a

:One of the verses which introduces the high station of the Noble Prophet (S) is

مَنْ يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللّهَ...

(Whoever obeys the Apostle certainly has obeyed Allah..."(١"

In this verse there is no limit set for obeying the Noble Prophet (S), it is for this reason that we understand that if a person obeys the Noble Prophet (S), he has in fact obeyed Allah, the Exalted. This verse is considered to be one of the verses denoting the infallibility of the Noble Prophet (S) because it and other verses of this kind impel .us to obey the Noble Prophet (S) absolutely

It shows that he does not order us to do anything that is opposed to the orders and wishes of Allah; otherwise, if Allah were to order us to obey Him on the one hand and then on the other hand order us to obey someone that tells us to oppose His own .orders, contradiction would arise

This same highness and superiority which has been proven for the Noble Prophet (S) has also been ascertained for the Infallible Imams ('a) and it is because of their station and status that Allah, the Exalted, has allotted them the title 'those vested with :[authority' [uli'l-amr

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُوْلِى الأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ...

O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with" (authority among you..."(۲

Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah Ansari says, "After this verse was inspired upon the

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۱- ۴:۸۰ Surat al-Nisa'.

۲- ۴:۵۹ Surat al-Nisa'.

Noble Prophet (S), I asked the Noble Prophet, 'O Prophet of Allah! We know Allah and His Prophet (S), but who are those vested with authority whose obedience Allah has "'?mentioned next to His own obedience

:In response, the Noble Prophet (S) said

".O Jabir! Those are my successors and the leaders of the Muslims after me"

Then, the Noble Prophet (S) enumerated every one of the Imams ('a) by name until he came to the name of the Twelfth Imam, may Allah hasten his reappearance; then, he :stated

The twelfth of them has both my name and my pseudonym. He is the proof of Allah" on the earth, His remaining one and mercy among His servants, and the son of al-

Husayn ibn 'Ali. He is the very person through whom Allah, the Exalted, will conquer the East and the West."(1)

The similitude of obedience to the Noble Prophet (S) and obedience to Allah also exists in relation to obedience to the Pure Imams ('a) and Fatimah al-Zahra' ('a), because in the same way that the Noble Prophet (S) has the highest possible perfection a creature can ever have, they too have the same perfection.

In order to better conceive this similitude of obedience to Allah and obedience to the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt ('a), it is befitting to reflect a bit on the supplication of Ziyarat Jami'ah al-Kabirah in order to understand what has been stated in regard to their lofty station and the need to obey and follow them. In this supplication

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۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲۶, p. ۲۵۰.

we read:

"Whoever has obeyed you has in fact obeyed Allah and whoever has disobeyed you has in fact disobeyed Allah and whoever has loved you has indeed loved Allah and whoever has enmity and hatred towards you truly has enmity and hatred towards Allah..."

This purport has been recorded in a more complete manner in the supplication of the days of the month of Rajab:

"O Allah! I request from you all that which those vested with your authority request from you."

Elsewhere, it states:

"There is no difference between You and them except that they are your servants and creatures."

The exemplification of divine perfection is within them but the difference lies in the

fact that their perfections emanate from Allah and Allah has attached these perfections to them and of course this difference is more than infinite—even though the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) have all the perfections and superiorities, still those perfections originally emanate from Allah and they are not anything in and of .themselves

When they are compared with other creatures though, all creatures are in need of them and not only is no one equal with them, there is an utmost difference and contrast between them and others; however, when they are compared with Allah, the Exalted, we notice that there is no correlation between them and Allah because they are absolutely in need and Allah is the Absolute Self-sufficient for the reason that .whatever every individual has emanates from Allah

Even so, comparing the station of the Noble Prophet

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S) and the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) with that of Allah is completely proper and we are incapable) of comprehending their positions and obedience to them is tantamount to obedience to Allah, love of them is tantamount to love of Allah and enmity and disobedience to .them is tantamount to enmity and disobedience to Allah

:In regard to the rank of Fatimah al-Zahra’ (‘a), the Noble Prophet (S) has said

Fatimah is a part of me; whoever gladdens her has gladdened me and whoever“ (saddens her has saddened me. Fatimah is the most beloved person to me.”(١

It has been said that the stations of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) have been introduced as similar to the eminence of Allah, just as some of the actions that are done in connection with some people have been introduced as similar to the deeds which are done in connection with another being. In the same way, remembering and invoking the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) has been introduced :as remembering and invoking Allah. Allah, the Exalted, states in the Qur’an

فَاذْكُرُونِی أَذْكُرْكُمْ ...

"Remember Me, and I will remember you."(2)

There is no doubt that Allah, the Exalted, remembers all creatures and He is not negligent of anything or person, but the purport of remembering in the blessed verse is attentive and present remembrance as well as existence of grace and reward. If an individual wants Allah to remember him and not to omit the granting of His blessings, he must remember Him.

1- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۴۳, p. ۲۳.
2- Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۵۲.

We observe in the hadiths that remembrance of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) has been compared with remembrance of Allah. Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"Remembrance of us is remembrance of Allah and remembrance of our enemy is remembrance of the devil."(1)

Comparing remembrance of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) with remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, is for the reason that they are the proxies of Allah and they do not conceive for themselves a station and rank other than servitude of Allah. When one brings to mind the name of the Noble Prophet (S) or an imam, does anything other than their being representatives of Allah occur to the mind? Because it does not, hearing their names concentrates one's attention on Allah—that is why remembrance of them is remembrance of Allah.

In exemplifying the station and sovereignty of Allah, the Exalted, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and the Noble Prophet (S) occupy a high level and they are perfect examples and in every aspect are the complete mirrors and exponents of the Almighty. There is no doubt that a mirror does not show off anything of itself and is only a means for showing the face which looks into the mirror to be seen with clarity. The Noble Prophet (S) and the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt ('a) too do not emanate anything from themselves and whatever they have is from Allah and they manifest Him well.

In view of the fact that the Pure Imams ('a) are the perfect mirrors of Allah, the Exalted, and they

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۵, p. ۴۶۸ -۱

are absorbed in the Divine Beauty, to the extent that they manifest the Attributes of Allah, the Exalted, with all their being, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) stated while pointing at his :home

Every kind of knowledge that does not come out of this house is null and void." Then" he also stated to one of his companions, "If you are in pursuit of correct knowledge, acquire it from the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). Verily, we have explained every kind of knowledge and interpreted all kinds of wisdom concealed in the divine verses. The knowledge of equitable judgment and arbitration has been entrusted to us. Allah chose us and has (not given to anyone that which He has given to us."(۱

The Need to Respect and Honor the Believers

point

If we consider those who are humble, whoever is more similar to them, that is to say, whoever is more unwavering in servitude of Allah and has distanced himself from egotism and the spirit of narcissism in his worship of Allah, the Exalted—in short, to whatever extent a man rids himself of egotism and becomes a servant of Allah and stops conceiving himself as independent, he acquires the merit of being similar to :Allah. In regard to visiting the believer, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states

To whoever visits his believing brother for the sake of Allah, Allah, the Exalted, has" stated, 'You have visited Me, your reward is with Me and I will not be pleased with (granting you a reward less than paradise'."(۲

It has been recorded in a hadith that if a believer visits a

.Ibid., vol. ۲۶, p. ۱۵۸ -۱
.Ibid., vol. ۷۴, p. ۳۴۵ -۲

believing brother for the pleasure of Allah and without having any other intention and earthly demand, Allah, the Exalted, sends an angel to ask him, "Why have you come here and what is your intention?" That believer responds, "I have come to the house ".of one of Allah's slaves and my brother in faith so as to meet and see him

The angel again asks, "Have you placed any trust in his hands and you have any demands on him?" He replies, "No." The angel further asks, "What then do you have to do with him and why have you come here?" That believer responds again, "I love him for the sake of Allah and that is why I have come to visit him." Finally, that angel gives him a message from Allah that, "O my servant! You have come to see Me and you are ".My guest and your reception is my responsibility

Indeed, once a believer has made up his mind to be devoted to Allah and eliminate his egoism and self-worship, he attains a station that visiting him becomes tantamount to visiting Allah. By means of closely observing and examining the verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths, we find a lot of varying themes in which visiting a believer and .respecting him has been introduced as visiting and respecting Allah, the Exalted

One of those instances is this very hadith in which the Noble Prophet (S), with the intention of advising and guiding Abu Dharr, has mentioned

respecting three kinds of the servants of Allah as tantamount to respecting Allah. We have to realize that if it were possible (Allah save us) for man to see Allah and thus revere Him, he would have attained great status. Of course, as devoted servants of Allah, we have to see Allah with the eyes of the heart, and then worship Him. As Imam :'Ali ('a) states

"I have never worshipped a God whom I have not seen."(1)

At the time of devotion and worship of Allah, sometimes a man who sincerely worships attains the position of venerating and honoring Allah. This level can also be achieved by a person who respects three groups of Allah's servants:

a) Honoring Elderly Muslims

The first group of people are the elderly who have spent their lives faithfully committed to Islam as well as its lofty divine laws and their beards have turned white upon the course of the religion. Respecting and having a high regard for this group of people is tantamount to venerating Allah. For this reason, if we see an elderly Muslim and respect him on account of his being a Muslim and his having lived his life on the path of Islam, we have respected Allah.

It is necessary that we understand what qualities this group of faithful servants and the worthy of Allah have that they have attained this nobility that respecting them is tantamount to venerating Allah.

Perhaps in respect to an elderly Muslim whose beard is white, an example has been made of him

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1- Ibid., vol. ۴, p. ۲۷.

because when a person looks at him, he sees a lifetime of servitude and devotion to Allah in his face. His luminous face and white beard, especially when the effects of prostration are also apparent on his forehead, are all indicative of a lifetime of devotion and servitude to Allah:

... سِيمَاهُمْ فِى وُجُوهِهِمْ مِنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ...

"...Their marks are [visible] on their faces because of the effect of prostration..."(1)

Seeing one lifetime of devotion to Allah is seeing one divine lifetime because servitude

and divinity are correlated; that is to say, when we see a devoted servant who has spent a lifetime worshiping Allah, we also see a divine life, wise conduct, guidance and leadership. It is for this reason that it has been said that servitude and lordship are two correlated concepts, like other correlated notions such as father and son, such that once one sees a man from the aspect of fatherhood, he obviously thinks about .the son as well

In the same way, once you look at a man from the aspect of his being a son, without doubt you think about his father. When man observes one lifetime of the devotion of a sincere servant of Allah, he thinks about one lifetime of praying to Allah and this is that same relationship and connection that exists between divine lordship and divine servitude. It is for this reason that such a comparison is proper that it should be said ;that when you respect him, you have respected Allah

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.Surat al-Fath ۴۸:۲۹ -۱

.as if, within his own limits, he manifests divine lordship on his face

The criterion for comparison is the existence of a joint aspect. Now, what joint aspect is better than that one should manifest the other like a picture which reminds the first of the one in the picture? An elderly Muslim embodies a lifetime of devotional service and worship in his face and when you look at the effects of servitude on his face, you also see Allah's lordship. Therefore, on account of what has been mentioned, in Islam .respect towards the elderly is invaluable

There is need to point out that some of the values that are valid and reputable in Islamic societies are also respected and valid in non-Islamic societies, but the criteria are different. Respect of the elderly is a value which is more or less prevalent in all societies, but it is considered a custom and manner in societies which do not have an .Islamic and divine point of view

For this reason, they do not have correct and stable criteria for respecting the elderly.

In the Islamic ethical order, values have logical criteria, strong roots as well as stable foundations although they are considered only worthy of respect in other societies. The elderly are respected in all societies, but in Islamic societies an elderly person is a manifestation of a lifetime of devotional service to Allah.

This criterion is not recognized in other societies at all, however. Therefore, we should pay heed to this

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fact that if mention about certain values which are also respected in other ethical orders is made in the Qur'an and the hadiths, it does not mean that the value that is valid and recognized in Islam is that same value respected and recognized in other ethical orders nor that the criteria are the same; on the contrary, it is possible that the criteria are very different from the measure in the other ethical orders. Ethical criteria of Islam are in fact quite superior and subtle.

With regard to what has been said, we understand that we ought to hold the elderly in high esteem and every one younger must respect the one who is older because he is a devoted servant of Allah and he has lived more years than the younger one, but respect to an elderly Muslim enjoys a special status and is similar to respecting Allah.

In respect to the benefits, in the hereafter, of respecting the elderly, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will grant safety to everyone who honors and respects the elder Muslims."(١)

In regard to decent behavior with Muslims of different ages, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"I advise you that the younger Muslims should conceive the middle aged as their elder brothers, consider the elderly Muslims as their fathers, conduct yourselves with kindness towards the younger ones, be loyal to your brothers in Islam and be good to your fathers in the faith."(٢)

On account of Islam being a religion of love and

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷, p. ۲۰۲ -۱
.Murtada Farid, Al-Hadith, vol. ۱, p. ۳۰۶ -۲

affection, and being a religion which breeds affinity and kindness among its followers by inviting them to brotherhood and love and because it wants them, for the purpose of creating unity and eradicating hatred and anger, to preserve the shadow of Allah's mercy upon themselves by speaking kindly with one another, the Noble Prophet (S) :states

A person who respects his Muslim brother and removes his sorrow by means of" speaking kind words to him will forever remain in the shadow of Allah's mercy for as (long as this virtue and quality remains in him."(۱

Therefore, it is befitting of us to respect the elderly who have spent their lifetime on the course of Islam and their beards have become white in this way even if their levels of literacy are not the same as ours because we are not sure whether our ages will reach theirs or whether we will preserve our religion until the time we reach their .ages

There have been youths who were deprived of the gift of divine guidance in their middle ages and died in a state of disbelief and enmity with Allah. Truly, these elderly people who soundly preserved their religion during the entire course of their lives and guarded Islam within their beings merit great respect, even though they may lack a certain series of academic notions. This group of people had much grace that they were honored with the merit to be able to spend the courses of their lives on the path

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱۶, p. ۸۴ -۱

!of Islam

b) Respecting the Teachers and Agents of the Qur'an

The second group is the scholars of the Qur'an and those who put it into practice. First and foremost, respect towards people who are both memorizers of the Qur'an and who act upon it is respect towards Allah and secondarily, respect towards people who are not memorizers but are both scholars of Qur'anic sciences and men of deeds is respect towards Allah. Likewise, a scholar is still worthy of a level of respect even if he is not a practitioner of the Qur'an but understand its sciences. It has been recorded in :a hadith that the Noble Prophet (S) stated

The nobles of my nation are the bearers of the Qur'an and those who keep vigil at" (night."(١

Special honor for the teachers of the Qur'an has been established in this hadith, but in this section of the hadith of Abu Dharr, besides mentioning nobility, it has been said that respect for these people is respect towards Allah; of course on the condition that they also act in accordance with the Qur'an. Characteristically, the bearers and followers of the Qur'an manifest the will and word of Allah both outwardly and inwardly as well as in words and in deeds. They have both memorized the words of .the Qur'an and their minds have understood the concepts of the Qur'an

In other words, their imagination has acquired the form of the words of the Qur'an, their intellect has apprehended its concepts and in practice they have manifested the Qur'anic truths; that is, their

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.Ibid., vol. ٨٧, p. ١٣٨ -١

entire being from head to toe has become Godly and Qur'anic. When you look at what they have memorized, you perceive that they are memorizers of the Qur'an. When you look at their knowledge, you see that they are bearers of Qur'anic knowledge and .they have understood its concepts

When you look at their deeds, you perceive that they act according to the dictates of the Qur'an. It is for this reason that their existence is a mirror of the Qur'an; that is to say, their existence is a mirror of the perfection of Allah and, by means of His Word, Allah is manifested in their beings; for this reason respect towards them is respect to .Allah

:In regard to the lofty and high status of the Qur'an, the Noble Prophet (S) states

The Qur'an is a guide away from misguidance and a light and liberator from" blindness. It is a cause of deliverance from error and a light and brightness in the dark. It is a predictor of what is to come in the future and a protector from perdition; a cause of growth and a guide for finding the right way in misguidance. It is an explicator of every sedition and deviation and takes man from the mean world to the bliss of the hereafter and in it is the perfection of your religion and there is no person (who turns away from the Qur'an except that he is led to hell."(۱

Also it has thus been recorded in a hadith in

.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۴, p. ۴۱ -۱

regard to the necessity to pay heed to the Qur'an, know it and select it as the book of :prosperity and redemption

Every person who derives their religion from the Book of Allah and the sunnah of the" Prophet (S) is stronger [and firmer] than the mountains and whoever acquires his (religion from the people will be misled by those very people."(۱

Elsewhere, in regard to the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), the Noble Prophet (S) :states

I will be the first person on the Day of Resurrection to meet Allah, the All-mighty and" All-powerful, with the Qur'an and my Ahl al-Bayt ('a). Then after me will come my nation, from whom I will ask what they did with the Book of Allah and my Ahl al-Bayt

(‘a).”[2]

That which has been mentioned was for the purpose that we appreciate that the Qur’an has many blessings whether in its material or spiritual aspect and man derives more virtue and benefit from the Qur’an the nearer he is to it, the more affectionate he is with it and the more he reflects upon it. The virtue and superiority of the Qur’an is so much that a hadith in this regard has been recorded. It is narrated that an individual asked one of the Infallibles, “What is the cause of your superiority over others?” The Infallible responded, “The cause of our superiority over others is that the knowledge of the Qur’an is with us.”

Therefore, it is befitting that we ought to always strive to honor

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۱- Usul al-Kafi, p. ۷, introduction [muqaddamah].

۲- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۴, p. ۴۰۰.

and venerate the Qur’an and never perceive the Gracious Qur’an in the same light as we perceive other books. Conceiving the Qur’an as higher than other books must not be confined to belief of the heart. Our conduct with the Qur’an should not be the same as our conduct with other books.

In addition to respecting the Qur’an in our hearts, we also have to have outward and apparent respect for the Qur’an; that is to say, our outward and apparent respect of the Qur’an has to be like our inward respect towards it. There is no doubt that this same respectful and cordial conduct with the Qur’an increases our faith.

Some of the prominent Muslim scholars would never sleep in the room where they kept the Gracious Qur’an. They never even used to sit with their legs stretched out in the rooms where they kept the Qur’an. There is a story narrated by both ‘Allamah Tabataba’i and Shahid Mutahhari in regard to Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Amoli, may Allah be pleased with him, that one night as a result of excessive tiredness the late Shaykh Amoli leaned on a pillow and stretched while reciting the Gracious Qur’an. The

following day his mentor, the late Mirza ‘Ali Aqa Qadi, may Allah be pleased with him, who was also the mentor of ‘Allamah Tabataba’i as well as the mentor of other prominent Muslim scholars, promptly said to him, “It is not good to stretch your legs ”.while reciting the Qur’an

Indeed, on account of

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venerating the Qur’an and laying the foundation for propagating Qur’anic culture in the society, we have to respect the teachers of the Qur’an and if we ourselves are one of the bearers of the Gracious Qur’an and we see other people respecting us, we should not think that because we are one of the teachers of the Qur’an we are no longer obliged to respect the other bearers of the Qur’an because there is no contradiction in one teacher of the Qur’an respecting another, just as respecting the sayyids and the Progeny of the Noble Prophet (S) is incumbent upon all including the sayyids themselves. When man sees a sayyid, he remembers the Noble Prophet (S) .and it is for this reason that he respects him, even if he himself is a sayyid

In regard to one of the great scholars who was also a sayyid, it has been narrated that one day as he was leaving a social gathering, his son respectfully paired up his father’s shoes so as to make wearing them easy. His father got very displeased with this and said, “Fatimah’s progeny do not have to pair my shoes.” Therefore, if a person is a sayyid, he ought to respect other sayyids and if he is a Muslim scholar, he ought to respect other scholars and there is no hindrance in one respected scholar respecting the other scholars. One scholar must respect other scholars on account of the fact that they are also religious scholars and bearers

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of Qur’anic knowledge and in reality this conduct is tantamount to venerating the .Qur’an itself

c) Respecting a Just and Equitable Ruler

The third group of people whose respect is tantamount to veneration of Allah is the group of just and equitable rulers, and before we embark upon the need to respect the just ruler, we will initially explain the need for a government and the law in a society and the qualifications of a custodian of Muslim affairs.

The Need for a Government and Law in Society

The late 'Allamah Tabataba'i states: "Authority denotes sovereignty, and is one of the necessary relative notions which man is in want of. In any case, the thing which mankind initially has need of is creating a society—in the sense of cohesion and connection of individuals of a community with one another whose every individual has a goal and will for themselves which is other than the goal and will of other individuals —not a society from the aspect of individual persons without cohesion and relationship; for the reason that every individual person has wants and goals which are different from the wants and goals of other individuals.

Every individual wants to destroy the successes of other people and to overcome them and to violate the rights of other human beings and in the end disorder and chaos arise and a society which is meant to be the cause of prosperity for man becomes the cause of his misery and perdition. In order to get rid of this problem, there is no other way except that the society has to create an

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invincible and prevailing power in order to bring under its influence the rest of the powers and forces.

This power has to bring all individuals under its control and consequently bring to justice and equilibrium rebellious forces which want to violate the rights of other individuals. This power also emancipates and liberates weak individuals form their weak and defenseless position and brings them into equilibrium until finally all forces of the society become equal in regard to power and weakness and that is when every one of those forces occupies its rightful place, and everyone enjoys his rights."(۱)

This makes it clear that man's life has a social and communal existence. Now some

questions come up. Why is man's life social? Is his communal existence deterministic and one imposed on man or does man's nature necessitate a social life? Is there or is ?there not any logical and volitional factor in choosing an effective social life

All these are topics which are put forward for discussion, but our opinion is that the logical and intellectual factor in choosing social life is effective because man conceives his social benefits and observes that his material and spiritual needs cannot or will not be secured in a desirable manner without social life and for this reason he lives in a .community and accepts its conditions

The other point is that social life entails clashes between the interests of the people in a society. That is to say, when people intend to have social life and

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.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۳, p. ۱۴۴ -۱

live and work together and share and distribute the fruits of joint efforts, disputes arise among their interests. There are certain people who intend to derive a greater share and derive unlimited benefit from natural bounties and would like to deal with other human beings in whatever manner they please and this is not desirable to .others

For this reason, a tug of war inevitably arises on the social scene prevention of which calls for setting up bounds and limits and laws must be devised. This also is a self-evident matter and its clarity lies in the fact that if man were to reflect a little in regard to human desires—whether material or spiritual—of course those related to the social life of man, he would realize that it is not feasible to secure all his wants in an unlimited manner and if people desire to live communally, they must place limits on .their desires and not act on whatever their hearts crave

For this reason, in order to eliminate or reduce conflict, we need limits and laws. If we do not believe in limits and laws for individuals in deriving benefit from social life and if individuals do not obey and follow these limits the aim of social life, which is deriving

more and better benefit from natural bounties for the purpose of material and spiritual perfection, will not be fulfilled. Therefore, social life must be managed in such a way that it provides the background for the day to day

perfection of all individuals in a society. It is only in this case that the goal of social life will properly be secured.

In the Islamic order which is based on the Islamic perspective and foundations, it is necessary that the law must be divine. The reason for this matter is the claim that Islam as a comprehensive school of thought has all the laws for managing social affairs. We who are the followers of Islam and believe that acting according to its dictates is a guarantee for everyone's prosperity must resist the different schools of thought and religions and inclinations which are found more or less in the majority of countries and defend our beliefs and ideals with sound reason and invincible logic.

Qualifications of a Righteous and Competent Ruler

Up to this point, the need for government and law in society has been explained and because the creation of a government and enforcement of law without a ruler is not feasible, we will now mention some of the qualifications of the custodian of the government.

۱. Knowledge of the law: A person that wants to enforce the law, whether that law is related to internal security, defense, international relations, or other issues, has to have sufficient knowledge of the law, jurisprudence and values on which that law is founded.

۲. Piety [taqwa]: Piety is a general qualification in Islamic culture and in common culture it is called 'dutifulness'. A person who is in charge of social affairs and is a custodian of people's interests has to think about securing

their expediencies, not securing his own personal interests and gratifying his worldly passions after attaining power, in which case such an individual does not have the competence to be a manager of people's affairs and lives and also the executor of the law for the reason that he interprets and defines or abrogates the law oppositely and according to his own wishes and sometimes explicitly opposes the law. For this reason, the second qualification for being a custodian of government affairs is ethical competence, or according to Qur'anic terminology, piety.

۳. Expertise: Every person who takes charge of a duty has to have the proficiency to perform it because merely having knowledge of law and piety are not enough for correctly discharging one's duties. Experience and expertise are also necessary to be able to solve short-term and long-term problems which are always presented to authorities.

There is no doubt that human societies need the law in order to solve small clashes and large conflicts and create limits in making use of personal and social amenities and finally creating equilibrium in communal life and every society requires a ruler and administrator in order to correctly enforce the law and prevent the rebellious and disobedient from lawless behavior; however, the question that exists is whether guardianship and custodianship belong to Allah and human beings become guardians and custodians of other people by the will of Allah or whether human beings are by principle competent to be guardians and custodians of other human beings.

In

response, it is said that no human being has the right of guardianship and custodianship over other people because man ought to obey only a person from whom he receives his graces and existential blessings and no one's opinion is obligatory to follow for the reason that ordinary people neither grant man existence nor are they effective in his immortality and continued existence.

That people are not forced to obey one another is the primary principle in the lack of

authority of human beings. Therefore, for the reason that man receives all his existential gifts from Allah, the Exalted, he is obliged to only obey and comply with His orders and following the orders of other than Allah is contingent on the other person .being appointed by Allah

With regard to what has previously been mentioned, when we read the Qur'an we notice that it rejects invalid guardianship, that is to say authority which has not been :approved by Allah

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لاَ تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَى أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يَهْدِی الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

O you who have faith! Do not take the Jews and Christians for allies: they are allies" for each other. Any of you who allies with them is indeed one of them. Indeed Allah (does not guide the wrongdoing lot."(١

The sentence 'Indeed Allah does not guide the wrongdoing lot' denotes that those) people were an unjust and wrongdoing group and that a wrongdoing oppressor never derives benefit from guidance and

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.Surat al-Ma'idah ٥:٥١ -١

never attains his goal and always remains on his wrong path. Therefore, if you too (.find yourselves in their category, you will never attain your aims and goals

:In another verse, the just ruler is thus introduced

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلاَةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

Your Guardian is only Allah, His Apostle and the faithful who maintain the prayer and" (give zakat(١) while bowing down."(٢

All Qur'anic commentators are unanimously agreed that the purport of this verse) regarding the phrase 'and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give zakat while

(.(bowing down’ is Imam ‘Ali (‘a

Therefore, due to the evidence which has been presented regarding the need for a government in the society and also the qualifications which have been mentioned for a just and competent ruler, it is clear that in the era of an infallible man like the Noble Prophet (S) or the Infallible Imams (‘a), they alone must occupy the position of head of .the government and it is natural that such a government is quite desirable and ideal

However, this state of affairs is not always feasible and, even in the time of an Infallible Imam (‘a), he can only rule in the town and province where he lives and only supervise the rest of the cities and provinces by appointing officials and functionaries. In the age of the Occultation of the Infallible Twelfth Imam, may Allah hasten his reappearance, someone has to take charge of this position and lead the Islamic society

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Zakat: the tax levied on various categories of wealth and spent on the purposes -۱ [.specified in Surat al-Tawbah (or, Bara’ah) ۹:۶۰. [ed

.Surat al-Ma’idah ۵:۵۵ -۲

on the basis of Allah’s laws and the constituents of Islam. He ought to have the :following qualifications

Sufficient knowledge of Islam: For the reason that in leadership and government .۱ responsibilities, protecting the Islamic laws and values is the responsibility of the ruler of the Muslims and he is the trustee of the religion and the honor of the people and the divine laws, he has to, more than anyone else, have the qualification of knowledge of the law, piety and ethical competence and the power and expertise to manage affairs. There is a hadith designating that if in a society a person becomes a leader while there is someone else better qualified and worthy than him, even only one man, (the society is doomed to failure and decadence until the Day of Resurrection.(۱

Piety [taqwa]: In a hadith the Prophet of Allah (S) has said that one of the .۲

qualifications of a competent leader is piety and chastity in regard to observing divine injunctions.(۲)

Addressing the people of Kufah in regard to the issue of leadership in a society, Imam al-Husayn ('a) said:

"A person is not an imam and leader unless his government is based on the Qur'an, he establishes justice, he is faithful to the religion of truth and he is totally dedicated to the path of Allah."(۳)

Addressing 'Uthman, Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"You should know that among the creatures of Allah, the most distinguished person before Allah is the just imam who has been guided by Allah and he

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۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۸۸, p. ۸۸.
۲- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۲, p. ۲۶۶.
۳- Muhammad ibn al-Nu'man (Shaykh al-Mufid), Irshad, p. ۱۸۶.

guides others. He stands by the recognized ways of the Prophet's (S) behavior and destroys unrecognized innovations. The Prophet's (S) ways are clear and they have signs, while innovations are also clear and they too have signs. Certainly, the worst man before Allah is the oppressive imam who has gone astray and through whom others go astray. He destroys the accepted sunnah and revives abandoned innovations."(۱)

۳. Foresight and management: The third qualification is expertise in the administration of affairs and good management of social issues as well as foresight.

The ability of the leader and his skill at management of social affairs in the way of Islam is a necessary qualification for a Muslim ruler and this qualification calls for many preliminary steps, experience and awareness. If a man attains this level of political adeptness and insight, it is possible to entrust the responsibility of Muslim

.affairs to him

:Imam 'Ali ('a) states

O people! The one most worthy of leadership is the person that is more capable and" (more aware about the commands of Allah in regard to it."(٢

The Religious Jurisprudent [Wali al-Faqih]: the Most Righteous and Competent Person

With regard to the criteria and attributes which have been mentioned for the Muslim ruler, we notice that in our era the circumstances for the government of the most competent individual have been provided. In the past, the possibility of setting up a government with such individuals was very difficult and sometimes seemed impossible, and such discussions too were never held and only the issue of 'religious .authority' [marja'iyyat-e taqlid] would be discussed

It is

p: ٢٠١

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ٥٢۶, sermon [khutbah] ١۶٣, trans. Fayd al-Islam -١
.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ١٧٣, sermon [khutbah] ١٨٣, trans. Shahidi -٢

for this reason that prominent religious scholars who were reformist thinkers and sympathetic to Islam would make an effort to find a person in the form of a religious .authority to introduce as the best person to serve the Islamic society

However, nowadays, thanks to Allah, the circumstances and means are available for bringing governments to hand with competent and worthy individuals in charge and by the grace of this great Islamic revolution and the pure blood of the martyrs, conditions prevail such that the most worthy and competent person can be at the .head of government; this blessing has to be greatly appreciated

We thank Allah that in the Islamic order we enjoy the blessings of the leadership of the 'religious jurisprudent' [wali al-faqih]. Now expressing thanks for this blessing can

sufficiently be done only by obeying and following the religious jurisprudent—he is the .guarantor of Islamic honor and the unity of the Islamic community

During the days of Imam Khomeini's life, we enjoyed the benefits of this blessing and today with a thousand sorrows we have been deprived of the blessings of that great man. Allah, the Exalted, has continued to bless us with the permanence of the shadow .the religious jurisprudent

We thank Allah that the Guardian Council and the well-informed people of the nation chose the most competent and worthy individual among the companions and helpers of the great Imam Khomeini, may Allah be pleased with him, namely Ayatullah .Khamene'i, may Allah prolong his life

All the

p: ۲۰۲

people too paid allegiance to him with complete willingness and all the true companions of Imam Khomeini continued on his path with perfect unity. Thanks to Allah that not the least weakness and harm has affected the course of events. We ask Allah, the Exalted, that this unity and solidarity of the authorities may last and become firmer day by day so the great ship of the revolution with the leadership and mastership of our great leader should take us to the shores of safety and desirable .goals

The Noble Prophet (S) advises Abu Dharr that respecting and venerating the just leader who rules in accordance with divine law and on the basis of justice and equity is tantamount to respecting and venerating Allah. For this reason, respect for the just leader is respect for Allah and one of the attributes and honors of Allah is governance because some of the divine names of Allah are the Ruler and the Sovereign and divine government practically manifests itself in the just laws of Allah and the just Muslim .ruler is in charge of this vital matter

The leadership of the just Muslim and the guardian of Muslim affairs who rules in

accordance with the laws of Allah and intends to practically enforce the laws of Allah in the Islamic society has a level of the guardianship of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) because the custodianship of Allah has originally and principally been (handed over to the Noble Prophet (S

and the Pure Imams ('a) and its lower level has been handed over to the just leader and guardian of Muslim affairs, and it is for this reason that respecting him is .tantamount to respecting Allah, the Exalted

Therefore, in contrast to the impression of some people that respecting the Muslim ruler is not of great importance, if a person respects the great leader and custodian of Muslim affairs for the sake of Allah and the Islamic order, without personal goals and material ambitions, and his respect is because the custodian of Muslim affairs enforces the divine laws of Islam and is the promoter of the Qur'an, he has attained .great virtue

I deem it a personal duty to mention that one of the best and most commendable practices which has been enlivened in our country after the victory of the Islamic revolution by the efforts of the custodian of Muslim affairs is the practice of reciting and memorizing the Qur'an to the extent that we often see on television even very .young girls and boys who are memorizers of the Qur'an

Sometimes, it is seen that a young girl who has not yet learnt how to pronounce words correctly has memorized a third of the Qur'an with the Arabic accent! If you remember well, before the victory of the revolution we had to endure a lot of pains to teach people how to correctly learn to recite the Opening Chapter [Surat al-Fatihah] and one other surah (chapter). Even for the educated

it was hard to learn to recite Surat al-Fatihah correctly. Now, we observe that young girls of six or seven years have memorized a third of the Qur'an and recite it better

than us! Is this not a cause of pride? Do we not have to respect a person who has ?enlivened this practice

Without the least doubt, respecting such a person is tantamount to respecting Allah and tantamount to respecting the Qur'an. Therefore, we ought not to be negligent of this matter. If we do not observe this respect, the divine rites of Islam will be wiped out. The continued existence of religion in the society is dependent on the continued existence of the rites of Islam. If these divine essentials do not become prevalent and are not common among the people, they will bit by bit be forgotten and remain .unappreciated

For this reason, we who perceive this great blessing which Allah has blessed us with must acknowledge its worth and respect the great leader of the Islamic system. Of course, as mentioned, the value of this respect is dependent on not having worldly desires and motivations but by discharging our duties for the pleasure of Allah, and respecting the leader of the Muslims is tantamount to respecting the Islamic order and Allah, the Exalted. □

Lesson ٣٣: The Need to Hold the Tongue and Censure Its Defects

point

O Abu Dharr! A person who does not guard his tongue renders his good deeds" useless. O Abu Dharr! Do not be a fault-finder, bootlicker, flatterer or argumentative person. Abu Dharr! Man

".is remote from Allah for as long as he is bad mannered

[The Reciprocal Effects of Deeds or Annulment [Ihbat] and Proscription [Takfir

In these explanations, the Noble Prophet (S) explains the importance of watching over the tongue in a different manner. The reason for this is that man ought not to leave his tongue free to say whatever his heart desires but he has to hold his tongue and reflect over what he says. Because talking is very easy and sometimes minor

motivations become a cause for too much talking or speaking ill of other people, the prominent religious scholars have tried by the use of different expressions and .various methods to advise us to take care and not let our tongues reign freely

One of those is the Noble Prophet's (S) expression that anyone that does not guard his tongue has squandered his deeds and leaves no good works to his account. Perhaps, the point of this expression is that the tongue leaves calamitous effects in the heart and soul of man and breeds mischief as well as depravity which exterminates the rest of man's deeds because as has been recorded in the verses of the Qur'an and successively narrated hadiths, man's deeds affect one another: sometimes man does a certain deed but later on he does another act that changes .the quality of his previous deed and leaves such an effect on it that it wipes it out

In books of theology a discussion has been held under the title 'annulment and proscription [or excommunication of deeds]' [ihbat wa takfir]. Annulment

p: ۲۰۶

habt] means good deeds becoming ineffective; that is to say the bad deeds of man] annul his good deeds and make them useless and ineffective while proscription [or excommunication] [takfir] denotes compensation of sins in such a way that good and decent deeds make up for the breach of previous deeds. And, because the root of all our deeds is belief and disbelief, the most delicate instance of annulment and .proscription [or excommunication] is faith and infidelity

Faith and decent deeds which man acquires after sinning and perpetrating indecent deeds compensate for previous infidelity and bad deeds and like a very bright light, wipe out previous darkness, but the opposite is also true. Disbelief and indecent deeds at the end of man's life can wipe out the effects of previous faith and good deeds and darken man's record and his destiny and, like fire which falls on a harvested yield, they burn everything suddenly. In other words, faith is like a very luminous light which brightens the heart and irradiates the psyche and eliminates .darkness and infidelity

As long as the psyche of man is in this material abode—the world of changes and transformations—it is always on the verge of brightness and darkness as well as increase and decrease of the light and darkness, until it wears the garment of the transient abode and when the opportunity for the choice of belief and disbelief is closed to him there will be no chance left for him no matter how much he

hopes to return to the world once again and embark upon ridding himself of the :darkness

حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ * لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ

When death comes to one of them, he says, 'My Lord! Take me back, that I may act" righteously in what I have left behind.' 'By no means! These are mere words that he (says.' And ahead of them is a barrier until the day they will be resurrected."(۱

In the viewpoint of the Qur'an, there is no room for the least doubt in regard to the influence between faith and infidelity and there are many verses denoting this issue, :amongst them

... وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِ ...

And whoever has faith in Allah and acts righteously, He shall absolve him of his" (misdeeds."(۲

:Elsewhere, it states

... وَمَنْ يَرْتَدِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَيَمُتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ فَأُولَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

And whoever of you turns away from his religion and dies faithless—they are the" ones whose works have failed in this world and the hereafter. They shall be the (inmates of the Fire, and they shall remain in it forever."(۳

The relationship between faith and infidelity exists between good deeds and bad deeds but not in a general sense and not in such a way that whenever a good deed is recorded on man's record of deeds, a previous bad deed is erased

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١- Surat al-Mu'minun ٢٣:٩٩-١٠٠.

٢- Surat al-Taghabun ٦٤:٩.

٣- Surat al-Baqarah ٢:٢١٧.

or that whenever a bad deed is recorded, a previous good and decent deed is blotted out; however, in regard to deeds we have to believe in a detailed exposition in this sense that some good deeds—if they are done in an acceptable and worthy manner—wipe out the effects of previous bad deeds. For example, repentance causes sins to be forgiven if it is done correctly:

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللّهَ يَجِد اللّهَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

"Whoever commits evil or wrongs himself and then pleads to Allah for forgiveness, will find Allah All-forgiving, All-merciful."(١)

Elsewhere, it also states:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلاَّ اللّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَى مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

"And those who, when they commit an indecent act or wrong themselves, remember Allah, and plead for [Allah's] forgiveness for their sins—and who forgives sins except Allah?—and who do not persist in what they have committed while they know."(٢)

Therefore, repentance is like a ray of light which shines on a dark spot and makes it bright. It is not true though that every good deed wipes out the effects of every sin. For this reason, it is possible for a believer to initially taste divine retribution before finally finding his way to eternal paradise.

The soul of man has various aspects and every group of good and bad deeds is related to one of its cases, for example the good deeds which are related to 'case A' do not wipe

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.Surat al-Nisa' ۴:۱۱۰ -۱
.Surat Al 'Imran ۳:۱۳۵ -۲

out the effects of sin related to 'case B' unless the good deed is so bright that it permeates the other aspects of the soul too, or the sin is so polluting that it contaminates the other aspects of the soul, too. For instance, in regard to prayer, the :Qur'an states

وَأَقِمْ الصَّلاَةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ وَزُلْفًا مِن اللَّيْلِ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ ...

Maintain the prayer at the two ends of the day and during the early hours of the" (night. Indeed good deeds efface misdeeds."(۱

Some of the sins such as bad conduct in regard to parents and drinking alcohol are a hindrance to the admittance of worship. In regard to the ill effects of drinking alcohol, :the Noble Prophet (S) states

My Lord swore and then stated, 'My slave does not drink alcohol in the world save" that on the Day of Resurrection I will make him drink boiling water equivalent to the (amount of alcohol which he drank'."(۲

It is worth mentioning that good and bad deeds sometimes have effects with regard to joys and sorrows or bestowal and negation of graces in this very world, especially good deeds done towards one's father and mother, which can be a cause of long life and repulsion of calamities and afflictions. On the contrary, lack of respect to other .people (especially teachers and mentors) can result in deprivation of graces

Yes, sometimes good deeds make up for previous bad deeds and sometimes bad deeds wipe out prior good actions. For as long as man

.Surat Hud ۱۱:۱۱۴ -۱
.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۶, p. ۱۲۶ -۲

is in this world, these influences exist between our endeavors. Allegorically, the heart or soul of man is like a room which is sometimes dark and becomes bright once light shines in it—sometimes the room is bright and becomes dark once the light is .switched off

Therefore, for as long as man lives in this world, he is exposed to these changes and transformations and it is not true that if man does a good deed the effects thereof remain forever, but it is possible for those good deeds to go to waste as the result of .doing inappropriate deeds

Therefore, the mutual effects of deeds upon one another is a general principle on the basis of which some sins wipe out the effects of some previous good deeds or even become a hindrance for the admittance of good deeds which will be done in the future. It has been recorded in the hadiths that some sins prevent the acceptance and :admittance of good deeds and prayers even for up to forty days

For up to forty days Allah does not accept the prayers and fasting of a person who" gossips about a Muslim man and woman unless the person gossiped about forgives (the gossiper."(۱

:In another hadith, it has been recorded that the Noble Prophet (S) stated

Purify your income in order for your supplication to be granted; verily the supplication" (of a man who eats illicit food is not granted for up to forty days."(۲

In regard to drinking alcohol, the Noble Prophet

.Mustadrik al-Wasa'il, vol. ۹, p.۱۲۲ -۱

.Ibid., vol. ۱, p. ۱۶۶ -۲

:S) states)

(For forty days the prayers of a person who drinks alcohol are not accepted."(۱"

The purport of the Noble Prophet's (S) sayings in this section of the hadith is that if a person is not careful of his tongue, does not hold it, and says whatever flows across it, no good deeds may remain for him; that is to say, the tongue is so influential that it can eliminate all the previous good deeds. This is a warning to man not to lightly perceive this small appendage in the mouth and reflect before talking in order to fathom the possible effects the words he wants to say might have and whether Allah will be pleased with those words or not. Will those words leave beneficial effects on ?the souls of others or not

After this general advice and recommendation, the Noble Prophet (S) enumerates some of the specific sins of the tongue. Of course, mentioning these sins of the tongue is due to the substantial role they play in changing the personality of a person and in causing his downfall and also for the reason that man is constantly in danger of being .contaminated by them

Censuring of Fault-Finding

One of the mean attributes which the Noble Prophet (S) enumerates is the act of looking for faults in other people. Without the least doubt fault-finding is one of the .unacceptable and inappropriate qualities

The fault-finder, on account of jealousy and enmity, is always searching for the defects and weaknesses of other people and thereafter exposing

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۶, p. ۱۲۶ -۱

them to others deriving pleasure from doing this. This mean quality has been

censured in the verses of the Qur’an and the hadiths and after examining them we understand that a person who is always looking for the faults of Muslims and stigmatizing them is one of the most wicked and evil of people. Allah, the Exalted, :states

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِی الَّذِینَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِی الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَهِ ...

Indeed for those who want indecency to spread among the faithful, there is a painful“ (punishment in the world and the hereafter.”(۱

:And the Noble Prophet (S) states

Every person who spreads and makes apparent the indecent deeds of other people“ is like the one who has done that same indecent deed he is spreading rumors about and every person who searches for the secret defects of a believer will not die before (being afflicted by and perpetrating that same fault.”(۲

One of the inducements which impel man to be constantly looking for the faults of other people is the feeling of lowliness and inferiority. When man has deficiencies, a low and inferior personality and no assets, he cannot see the perfections of other people and it is for this reason that he embarks upon looking for blemishes and damaging the personalities of others to make their perfections less apparent. He tries to find the weak points of other people so as to publicize them. Whenever talk about someone arises, instead of talking about the bright and positive points of

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۱- Surat al-Nur ۲۴:۱۹.
۲- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۳, p. ۳۸۴.

.that person, he always talks about their defects

In a gathering of believers once someone mentions the name of another believer, on the basis of Islamic manners, some people try only to mention the good and praiseworthy attributes of the man named but other people, on account of their

weakness in faith, jealousy and inferiority complex, mention the weak and negative points which they know about that person and the misdeeds he has committed. Sometimes, they go a step further and talk about dubious things related to him with .much surety and may even accuse him falsely

It is a bad habit for man to always endeavor at mentioning the weaknesses of other people and unfortunately there are a lot of people who are afflicted with this blight. Every person can test himself when there is talk about another believer—especially one with whom he is in competition. Does he praise him or is he pleased when mentioning his weak points? Does he try by various means to make others aware that ?another person has faults

In a natural manner, a person has to see whether when the name of an individual is mentioned he loves to mention the good qualities of the individual and praise and respect him in the presence of other people or he embarks upon enumerating his weaknesses and bad qualities and makes him appear small and inferior. This is a very bad habit and its roots, as has already been said, is jealousy and a feeling of lowliness and

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inferiority. He feels pain because of what other people have and he cannot bear to .see other people have what he does not have

We have to bear in mind that it is very good for us to be such that whenever the name of a believer is mentioned, we enumerate his good attributes even if sometimes the conditions and stimulus call for us to mention the person's defects, like when man is advising and consulting with someone in regard to a fault which they are investigating .in regard to a certain individual—which is a special case

We should not to be bothered by the things other people have and we need to comprehend that the greatest asset of a believer is his connection with Allah. A believer does not perceive any other asset save that connection and, if man comes to possess this asset, he feels greatness in his soul such that all other great things and

.assets become inferior in his eyes

He has attained a high level and has gotten drowned in the boundless ocean of greatness and he enjoys the benefits of indescribable pleasure and gratification and it does not make any difference to him whether other people respect him or not, or whether they praise him or curse him. Without the least doubt, such an individual, on whose heart the ray of faith has shone, is preoccupied with honoring and respecting .the believers because this deed is pleasing to Allah and brings about proximity to Him

In contrast

to the believer whose asset is only faith and attention to Allah and who neither becomes pleased by the respect of other people nor becomes saddened by their disrespect, people who have deficiencies and do not have the asset of faith perceive the highness of their personality according to the measure of respect that other people accord to them. This is what is today termed as 'social status.'

They conceive their personality according to their social standing and the opinions of other people in regard to them and their capital is the positive opinion of other people and their high social standing. They perceive themselves as having a lofty personality when other people praise them and being rejected and lacking in personality when they are reproached and blamed, and they think that the world has come to an end .when others see them in any negative way

Unfortunately, people who have material and spiritual deficiencies—like deficiencies in knowledge, spiritual perfections, wealth and material amenities—cannot see and appreciate the superiorities of other people, and it is for this reason that they embark upon casting doubt on the perfections of others to damage their personalities. This is the attribute of the soul of the fault-finder who is preoccupied with looking and searching for the faults of other people. Such an individual puts his worldly and heavenly prosperity in danger and becomes afflicted by the wrath of Allah as a result .of divulging and narrating the defects of other people

Regarding the prohibition of

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:fault-finding and gossiping about other people, Imam 'Ali ('a) states

O servant of Allah! Do not be quick in exposing a person's fault for he may be" forgiven for it, and do not think yourself safe even for a small defect because you may be punished for it. Therefore, every one of you who comes to know the faults of others should not expose them in view of what he knows about his own faults."(۱)

Elsewhere, he states that paying attention to one's own defects prevents man from :looking for the faults of others

He who sees his own shortcomings abstains from looking into other people's" shortcomings."(۲)

With regard to what has been mentioned, it is befitting that we refrain from searching for and talking about other people's defects as well as damaging the personality of other people and bear in mind that with the prevalence of the disease of fault-finding in the society, the spirit of unity, oneness and brotherhood loses its place to the spirit of disunity and in this case the foundations of the community shake and the structure .of social affairs crumbles

Likewise, fault-finding gives rise to suspicion, enmity and hatred in the society and also causes the personality of some individuals to be trampled underfoot by the whims and caprice of people of weak personality whose greatness lies only in destroying the personalities of other people and likewise as a result of the spread of the disease of fault-finding in the society, ethical bounds disintegrate. Also, this disease incites

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۱- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۴۲۹, sermon [khutbah] ۱۴۰, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

۲- Ibid., p. ۱۲۴۹, pithy aphorisms ۳۴۱.

and strengthens a spirit of sin and depravity in people who might have refrained from a great many sins on account of social considerations.

Censuring of Flattery and Sycophancy

One of the unsuitable attributes which Imam 'Ali ('a) enumerates is flattery. The spirit of flattery and sycophancy, like fault-finding, derives from man's weakness of character and inferiority complex. In reality, this is a quality of people with deficiencies of character who try to make up for their defects by attracting the attention of other people by flattering them, imagining that perhaps by doing so they may secure a higher position for themselves.

This is an attribute of people of weak character who do not conceive the infinite power and dominion of Allah and, as a result, set their greedy and covetous eyes on other human beings and seek their honor and greatness from they who themselves are need of Allah. If man sets his eyes of the Absolute Self-sufficient and seeks help from the Source of existence, he no longer has any need to flatter other people. In regard to the fact that only Allah, the Exalted, is worthy of praise, Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) states:

"O my Allah! You deserve handsome description and the highest esteem. If wish is directed towards Thee, Thou art the best to be wished for. If hope is reposed in Thee, Thou art the Most Honored to be hoped from. O my Allah! Thou hast bestowed on me such power that I do not praise any other than Thee, and I

do not eulogize anyone save Thee. I do not direct my praise towards others who are sources of disappointment and centers of misgivings. Thou hast kept my tongue away from the praises of human beings and eulogies of the created and sustained. O my Allah! Every acclaimer has on whom he praises the right of reward and recompense. Certainly I have turned to Thee with my eye at the treasure of Thy mercy and stores of forgiveness..."(۱)

Sometimes, man praises and enumerates the good qualities of a believer for the sake of pleasing Allah and honoring a believer, but sometimes he praises other people as a result of covetousness and carnal desires in order to attract their attention so that .they may provide him with material help whenever he needs them

The spirit of sycophancy and flattery is one of man's disagreeable traits and it is not compatible with faith in Allah because although he ought to perceive his destiny in the hands of Allah, he conceives his destiny to be in the hands of others and, in order for .them to grant him good, he embarks upon flattery

As has been said, the psychological and spiritual source of this attribute is an inferiority complex; that is to say, man feels empty-handed and makes himself dependent on others and to earn some good under the auspices of reliance on them .he may stoop to the means of flattery

It is worthwhile to pay attention to the repercussions of the spread of the spirit

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۲۶۹, sermon [khutbah] ۹۱, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

of flattery in the society and see what effects too much flattery and praise has on people: beyond the shadow of doubt excessive praise gives rise to pride and vainglory and produces pampered, self-satisfied and over-expectant people and incites the feeling of self-praise and big-headedness and in regard to oppressors. Flattery is a .kind of practical approval and encouragement of their deeds

Sycophancy and praising of others can give rise to their considering this praise as a portion of their good attributes and deeds and as a result of this forget their weak points and, from the opposite side, make the ugly and illicit deeds which they have .committed appear acceptable in their point of view

Flattery, besides being a hindrance to some kinds of ethical edification, changes the course of less capable and selfish individuals as well as making them daring in

displaying their weak moral points and oppressive, illogical and evil methods. It is for this reason that the leaders of religion detested this blameworthy method and would warn their followers to strive their utmost against it. In this regard, the Noble Prophet :(S) stated

(Throw dirt in the faces of the sycophants."(۱"

This saying is related to a person who flatters a Muslim; otherwise, the judgment of someone who flatters an infidel is even harsher. This expression is meant to prevent the spread and increase of the mentality of sycophancy in the society. We even know that a person like Imam 'Ali ('a), who was the perfect image of all human

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۳, p. ۲۹۴ -۱

virtues and ideals and was higher than ordinary human beings and the manifestation of divine majesty and beauty, never used to permit anyone to praise and compliment .him in his presence

:Once a group of people praised Imam 'Ali ('a) in his presence, the Imam stated

O my Allah! You know me better than myself, and I know myself more than they" know me. O my Allah! Make me better than what they imagine and forgive whatever (they do not know."(۱

Imam 'Ali ('a) wanted to make them know that he had no need of their praise and did not permit them to praise him so that this objectionable quality, that is to say flattery, would not spread in the Islamic community because if on that day they were permitted to praise Imam 'Ali ('a), on another day they would have praised another ruler and not all people are infallible so as not to be deceived by such flattery; on the contrary, some people are gradually affected by these false compliments and imagine that what other people say in regard to them is correct and this is a great blight that can mislead others into ignorance and cause people to perceive themselves as higher

than who or what they actually are and bit by bit believe that which is said in regard to them. Such wrong beliefs result in people deviating from the course of equilibrium and imagining themselves as higher than what they actually are and this can become a .great calamity

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۱۳۱, wisdom [hikmat] ۹۶, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

In addition to this, improper praise is a sign of hypocrisy and guile. As Imam 'Ali ('a) :states

To praise more than what is due is sycophancy; to do it less is either because of" (inability to speak or envy."(۱

:Elsewhere, he states

If a person falsely praises you for a virtue which you do not have, it is befitting that" (on another day he reproaches you for a bad attribute for which you are blameless."(۲

The Imam intends to make this point apparent that flattery and sycophancy never aim at telling the truth and reality, but personal interests compel man to falsely praise other human beings; for this reason, if one day things change for the worse and a person sees his benefit lying in weakening an individual whom he previously used to praise regarding a virtue that was actually absent in his personality, he will embark upon censuring and reproaching that person by attributing to him ugly qualities which .are not in his character imagining that perhaps he will earn some benefit in this way

Therefore, Islam does not permit man to be a flatterer for the reason that the spirit of sycophancy produces ugly effects both in the spirit of the flatterer and the flattered as well as in the community. In reality, the sycophant has to bring himself low in order to pronounce those false praises and Allah, the Exalted, is not pleased to see a believer trample his own greatness and honor underfoot and conceive himself so inferior as to

.Ibid., wisdom [hikmat] ۳۳۹, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

.Ghurar al-Hikam, p. ۶۷۱ -۲

embark upon insincere praise of others. The effects of sycophancy on the spirit of the flattered is that he forgets himself and imagines that he possesses such a high personality and lofty character that he is entitled to the respect and praise of other people and in the end he disregards the deficiencies and weaknesses of his character .and conjectures his life and conduct as filled with lofty and positive points

:The Noble Prophet (S) states

Whenever you praise your brother in his presence, it is as though you have stuck a" (thorn in his neck."(۱

Besides what has been mentioned, praising wicked and corrupt people results in their becoming daring to abuse and encroach upon other people's rights. A flattering person, besides being guilty of hypocrisy and lies, by means of his false praise and compliments, prepares a suitable ground for perversity, extravagance licentiousness and aggression of the corrupt, especially false leaders and rulers and in reality this in itself is a cause of corruption and partnership in grave and destructive crimes which are committed by oppressors against other human beings. It is for this reason that :the Noble Prophet (S) stated

When a rich person is praised, the Throne of Allah trembles and Allah becomes" (wrathful."(۲

The Noble Prophet (S) states that a person should not be a fault-finder who looks for and recites the weak points of other people and thus defames other human beings because Allah is not pleased at the defamation of people's repute or even at the disclosure of

.Jami‘ al-Sa‘adat, vol. ۲, p. ۳۲۷ -۱
.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۷, p. ۱۵۲ -۲

their defects. He Himself has concealed the defects of people so that they may live with one another with affection and love. He does not permit the believers to divulge the defects of one another or even reveal one's own faults because man does not even have the right to defame himself. Likewise, the Noble Prophet (S) states not to falsely attribute qualities to people that they do not have due to flattery. In reality, going to extremes in both instances [of praise and fault-finding] is harmful for the believer and a person must not abandon moderation. If one wants to mention the good qualities of other people, he must content himself with that extent that is acceptable for sake of goodness and expediency and not mention people's good .attributes for the sake of worldly gain in a way that forsakes moderation

Censuring of Sarcasm and Verbal Abuse

One of the indecent attributes which the Noble Prophet (S) enumerates is being sarcastic and verbally abusive. Offending the believers with biting and acrimonious words is termed as taunting. Taunting is when someone endeavors to mention the defects and weaknesses of people to them and thus wound or provoke them. It is befitting for a person to endeavor at consoling other people for their failures and to try to pronounce words which serve as salve on their wounds, not to speak as though those people deserve and are entitled to their troubles and failures. Imam 'Ali ('a) :states

The sharpness and incisiveness of the tongue is more than that of"

(the spear."(۱

The source of spiteful words is enmity and vindictiveness which impels one who taunts to use virulent and venomous words when talking to another person. It is likely for the appearance and contents of his words to be correct, but he utters them acrimoniously and cruelly which causes pain and sadness for the other person. When

discussing academic issues with another person, he could use soft words to make the other understand that he has not understood something correctly, but instead he makes him understand by means of an indirect statement, a hint and biting words.

When a person seeks to help others become aware of their faults, he should say it with words that are going to be effective and help them understand their mistakes in such a way that they will concede and not become angry and persistent in their mistakes and in addition to the first mistake, make a second mistake due to obstinacy and consequently cascade into ignorance and stubbornness because a wrong method of mentioning the fault and thereafter correction becomes more difficult.

In order to enjoin the good and forbid the evil, some people behave in such a manner that not only is the other person not corrected and not attracted to recommended things, but is prompted to more evil by means of bad methods of advising and sometimes by censuring and repeated reproaching. It is for this reason that Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"Refrain from censuring and reproach because it makes sin appear big and

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۱- Ghurar al-Hikam, p. ۳۸۲.

renders advice ineffective."(۱)

Reprimanding people who repeatedly censure and reproach other people, Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"Excessive reproach and blame flames the fire of stubbornness."(۲)

"Refrain from repeated censuring of people for the reason that reproaching the wrongdoer over and over again makes him audacious and stubbornly persistent in his misdeeds; in addition, it renders advice ineffective."(۳)

Therefore, when you want to remind someone about his weaknesses, encounter him

with cheerfulness, kindness and consolation. Your tongue ought not to be as stinging as a scorpion's bite. Speak in such a way that will persuade that person to embark .upon correcting and edifying their weakness

If one says that the other person has made a mistake or that he does not understand and other expressions like this, it is natural for him not to be pleased and become angry. If we were in his position and were talked to in a stinging manner, would we not become annoyed? Every person becomes angry and reacts once he is talked to in an improper manner, affronted or treated rudely unless one is so pious that he .graciously keeps quiet and does not respond

That being the case, when we ourselves do not tolerate rude encounters, how do we hope to incite other people to edify their characters by means of our biting words? If we always intend to do good to other people, our behavior and conduct will always be .the expression of good human morals with which we have been endowed

Censuring of Obstinance [Mara'] and Insistence on One's Opinion

The fourth undesirable quality which the Noble

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۷, p. ۲۱۶ -۱

.Ibid., p. ۲۳۲ -۲

.Ghurar al-Hikam, p. ۲۷۸ -۳

Prophet (S) mentions is obstinacy in one's errors. Obstinate behavior denotes rejection of the another person's words and proving one's own superiority in such a way that a person is not willing to admit one's own mistake when he commits it and he justifies his own words with explanations with the intention of rectifying his own error and he does this repeatedly because every time he insists on his mistake, the other side also sees that the adamant person is trying to portray as right that which is .wrong

When the spirit of contention and bickering is aroused in man, he tries to impose his

ideas on others and this attitude derives from egotism and selfishness; that is to say, man cannot easily admit his errors and say that he has made a mistake because he conceives it as demeaning to his position. Although he knows that he has made a mistake, he does not want other people to know that he has committed an error. It is for this reason that once others explain a person's mistakes to him and make him conceive his errors, he stubbornly rejects their explanations and tries to portray his ideas as right and insists that what he has said is correct!

There is no doubt that uncompromising behavior is not devoid of injury to other people and incites their anger and protest. It is for this reason that obstinacy causes stubborn people to attack one another and each one of them tries to prove that

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his opinion is superior. The Noble Prophet (S) states:

"Rid yourselves of obstinacy because there is no wisdom in it and no man remains safe from its evil."(۱)

Obstinacy and stubborn insistence on one's opinion is not a desirable quality and unfortunately some educated people become corrupted by it. When they put forward a wrong opinion during academic debate, they stubbornly insist on their opinion and feel as if they have lost if they concede to the opinion of their friend.

Even worse, if there is a third person overseeing the debate, they try even harder to defend their assertion in order to protect their repute; especially if that third person is a student and disciple! In short, all these are incentives for man not to admit the truth and to prefer untruthfulness over the truth.

With regard to the consequences of stubbornness and obstinacy which are directed at man, it is worthwhile for a person to embark upon fighting this quality. One of the calamities which stubbornness breeds in man is presenting unreal and untruthful opinions.

Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

“(٢)Stubborn insistence on one’s own opinion corrupts man.”(

One of the calamities of stubbornness mentioned in the words of Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is that man’s soul becomes sick and diseased:

“(٣)Stubbornness and obstinacy impairs the soul.”(

One of the calamities mentioned in the words of Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is the degeneration of man’s mind and the decadence of his thoughts:

“(۴)The obstinate person does not have a correct opinion.”(

The way of curing and fighting stubborn insistence on one’s

١- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٢, p.١٣٨.

٢- Ghurar al-Hikam, p. ٣۶.

٣- Ibid., p. ١٧.

۴- Ibid., p. ٣١.

incorrect opinion is for man to uproot pride which gives rise to a false manifestation of virtue and knowledge from his inner being and know that obstinacy causes enmity and hatred and destroys affection and brotherhood.

Likewise, it is befitting of students to try to get rid of obstinacy by adopting a negative stand against it and always conceding to correct opinions and speaking good and correct words so that consequently the spirit of magnanimity and conceding to the truth becomes their habit and second nature and the quality of stubbornness and obstinacy is uprooted from their hearts.

In order to get rid of stubbornness and obstinacy, man has to convince that every person, whether he likes it or not, makes mistakes and errors and it is not true that any human being is immune from error. Only the Infallibles are immune from errors and all the others are likely to make mistakes. People make mistakes either in

explaining and narrating things or in understanding and conceiving them. This is not something unexpected and happens for everyone, and for this reason it should not be construed as a defect. Of course, man should strive to make fewer mistakes, especially in his lessons and academic debates by studying longer and harder. However, when one makes a mistake he ought not to construe it as a great personal .defect and think that he has lost his repute and is a failure

Secondly, once he understands that he has made a mistake, he has to

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immediately admit his mistake and admit that the other person is right. Of course, it is hard to admit one's errors the first time, but after one tastes the sweetness of admitting his mistakes and comprehends that making mistakes regarding his views and opinions is not a defect, it becomes easy for him. He tells himself that he is a human being and is not immune from error and sometimes people make mistakes .and others understand, and at other times the opposite is true

How good it is also that he should thank his friend who has made him aware of his error and has shown him the right way and the correct opinion. One should not content himself with keeping silent because if we want to be set free from the attribute of stubbornness and obstinacy, we have to try to adopt a position opposite to it and the position opposite to obstinacy is admitting one's mistakes. Man has to tell ".his friend, "You understood the matter very well and I did not comprehend it

As a result of this sweet and good conduct, not only does one not feel like a failure or feel deficient, but this suitable behavior brings about a sweet life full of intimacy and .sincerity and man becomes more beloved and trusted by other people

On the other hand, when a person tries to justify his erroneous words and conceal his mistakes, other people's confidence in him is taken away and they will not pay

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any attention to him even when he wants to say something worthwhile and true.

However, when one admits his mistakes and concedes to the correct opinion of the other person, they put their confidence in what he says because they know that he does not utter careless remarks and, as a result of this conduct, his social standing also rises.

Of course, one should not seek after and be pleased with a better social position, but conceding to the truth has such an effect and result. Both the trust that other people have in him increases and their love for him as well, and also his social rank improves. In addition to that, he is delivered from the ugly attribute of obstinate behavior. Of course, one must not fall in love with his social standing and must put his trust in Allah and that which is pleasing to Him and in every deed one's incentive has to be winning the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, and other good effects are subsidiary rewards of man's conduct.

Lesson ۳۴: The Manifestation of Worship and the Role of Mosques in Islam

point

After discussion and review of sections regarding recommendations of the Noble Prophet (S) to Abu Dharr, we now embark on evaluation of another portion of advice about the mosque, the etiquettes of being in a mosque and the importance of prayer.

The Concept and Scope of Worship

point

We will initially embark upon explaining the concept of worship and its scope. As has already been mentioned, man's true perfection is found in proximity to Allah, the Exalted, and the means of attaining

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this proximity, the means of man's real perfection, is spiritual service and worship. Divine acts of devotion and veneration of Allah have rich and profound contents and so much attraction that they take every weary person in the sea of bewilderment to

.the shores of peace and tranquility and finally towards annihilation in Allah

Indeed, neither pen nor explanation can describe the loftiness and profoundness of the spiritual attraction of worship and in fact this high divine notion cannot be expressed in the form of words and explanations and it is only that true Imam ‘Ali ibn :Abi Talib (‘a), gallant and in love with worship, who states

O my Allah! The esteem of being your servant is sufficient for me and this glory is“ (adequate for me that you are my Lord.”(۱

This saying arises from the spirit of being overflowing with love of worship and .devotional service to Allah

Indeed, worship and spiritual service to Allah has a stable and firm order without which the soul of man would not be satiated, and material attraction and evolution cannot affect or fill the empty space resulting from its loss because no matter how much man makes industrial and technological progress in material fields, not only does he not become free of want of the Absolute Self-sufficient, but his need and .want increases

a) Divisions of Worship

:From a general point of view, worship can be classified into two divisions

Worship in specific and particular terms consisting of acts of devotion such as the .۱ ,prayers, fasting, the hajj

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۷, p. ۴۰۲ -۱

.etc

Worship in general terms consisting of every good deed which is done with the .۲ intention of obeying Allah, the Exalted. Under this definition even eating, associating with people, talking and other deeds which Allah, the Exalted, has counted as good

.and are done with the intention of obeying Him are worship

Therefore, in order for man’s life to be spent on the right course and not in vain, losing this vital asset, a person has to spend most of the moments of his life in devotional service to Allah, whether in its specific or general terms. He should try to perform that which has been legislated as worship according to divine law and/or perform related .duties and acts with the intention of pleasing Allah in order to gain proximity to Him

If a small or great deed is performed by man and he does not fit it into this framework of specific or general worship, it will be null and void and become a cause of regret on the Day of Resurrection. If, God forbid, an act were a sin and a cause of worldly and heavenly suffering and torment and eternal divine retribution, or if it were not a sin but neither good nor bad [mubah] or disapproved but not forbidden [makruh], it .wastes man’s capital on something which has no benefit for him

In divine law there is a great deal of recommendation to perform deeds which are essentially neither good nor bad, but if these deeds are done

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.with the intention to obey this recommendation, they will be acts of worship

Bearing in mind the Islamic and Qur’anic point of view regarding human life, the goal of life, the path of prosperity, one’s deeds and conduct, it is natural that the Islamic call ought to be such that one should worship more and better: with regard to quantity, all the deeds that man discharges can become acts of worship and in reality worship acquires such an expansive and wide scope that it encompasses all of man’s .existence

However, regarding quality (quality of worship is dependent on intention and knowledge [ma‘rifah])—the more a person’s awareness and his love for Allah increase, the more his intention in performing acts of worship become purer and the more he has presence of heart when worshiping, the greater the quality of his acts of .devotion

Sometimes two cycles [rak'ats] of prayer have more divine reward than thousands of prayers. This is something we all know and Islam has made us pay heed to the fact that we must try harder to make our deeds more divine and our lives entirely devoted to Allah because our perfection is found in spiritual service to Allah. The Noble Prophet (S) states:

"The most worthy of people is he who adores worship, embraces devotional service to Allah and loves it with all his heart. His whole body and soul is immersed in it and all his efforts are focused upon it and therefore he pays no importance to ease or

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hardships of the world."(۱)

With regard to what has been said, it is natural that the One that has considered such a goal for humanity, has provided all the circumstances that are necessary for man to be able to make all his deeds divine and has made available all the means that can help people to worship better and more because the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is greater than that of any other and He wants all His servants to become nearer to Him more than anyone else. Just as His Being and knowledge is infinite, His will to do good too is endless; the love which He has for His servants too has no bounds or limits.

One who has such endless mercy and desires so much good for His servants legislates injunctions which will draw His servants closer to Him. It is for this reason that legislating divine laws, obligatory and recommended acts of worship and also determining the quality and etiquettes are all divine graces. Allah, the Exalted, desires that we attain the perfection and prosperity which is befitting of us and even more. It is for this reason that He has provided the necessary means existentially and legislatively.

b) Prayer, Zenith of Devotional Service and Proximity [Qurb] to Allah

Existentially, the more mercy Allah has for his servants, the more grace He grants for them to discharge duties and acts of worship; of course, what Allah does is not

extravagant and is according to special as well as particular divine laws. Legally, He encourages people by legislating injunctions

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۱۳۱ -۱

the discharging of which make His servants nearer to Him. One of the things He has enjoined is prayer, which is the best means to gain proximity [qurb] to Him. The :Infallibles state

(Prayer is a means of proximity for every pious believer."(۱"

Of course, we ought to bear in mind that it is not the form and outward appearance of prayer that brings about this proximity and nearness to Allah, but the reality and essence of prayer that causes man to acquire proximity and from the point of view of the Qur'an and the hadiths the reality of prayer is the original and main goal, not the :outward form. Allah, the Exalted, states

... وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِی

(And maintain the prayer for My remembrance."(۲"

:Elsewhere, Allah, the Exalted, states

وَأَقِمْ الصَّلاَةَ إِنَّ الصَّلاَةَ تَنْهَى عَنْ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ...

And maintain the prayer. Indeed the prayer keeps away from indecency and evil, and" (certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest."(۳

Allamah Tabataba'i states, "The context of this verse bears witness to the fact that ' the purport of the prayer keeping away from indecency denotes that the very nature of prayer inhibits corruption and prohibited acts. You might ask how prayer prevents .us from committing indecency

In response, we say that if Allah's servant performs the five daily prayers each day

continuously all his life, especially if he does them with all his fasts in a righteous society and the individuals of that society also fast diligently as he does, naturally such prayer

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱۰, p. ۹۹ -۱
.Surat Ta Ha ۲۰:۱۴ -۲
.Surat al-'Ankabut ۲۹:۴۵ -۳

is not compatible with commission of mortal sins. Indeed, paying attention to Allah through servitude in such an environment and with such people should inhibit man from every kind of sin including murder, aggression, seizure of the property of .orphans, adultery or fornication and other acts which religion considers iniquitous

Not only does it prevent the perpetration of sin but also even the thought of it because prayer is the remembrance of Allah and this remembrance imbues in the worshipers faith in the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, the prophetic mission and divine retribution on the Day of Resurrection and inspires the worshippers to address their Lord with purity as well as sincerity of intention, seek assistance from Him and request that He guide them on the straight path; in addition, they seek refuge in Him from misguidance and His wrath. Also, prayer impels man to become attentive to the threshold of the greatness and magnificence of Allah and to remember their Lord with (praise, adoration, gratitude and exaltation."(۱

However, from the perspective of the hadiths, it has been narrated from the Noble Prophet (S) that the Divine Essence of Allah does not pay attention to the prayer of a person whose heart is not harmonious with his body and his soul is not attentive to his .prayer

It is very clear that this hadith alludes to the true spirit of prayer, which is invocation and remembrance of Allah because remembrance of Allah is the goal of prayer. It brings purity

.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۱۶, p. ۱۳۳, Isma'iliyan Publications -۱

and serenity to the heart and refines and perfects it, preparing it for divine manifestations. In regard to the fact that remembrance of Allah is the heart of prayer, :Imam 'Ali ('a) states

Certainly, Allah the Glorified, the Sublime, has made His remembrance luminosity for" the hearts which hear with its help despite deafness, see with its help despite (blindness and become submissive with its help despite unruliness."(۱

:In continuation, he states

In all periods and times when there were no prophets, there have been persons with" whom Allah, precious are His bounties, whispered through their thoughts and spoke ".through their wisdom

Also, it was with due consideration of the reality of prayer and its importance that Imam 'Ali ('a), in the middle of the jihad and fighting against the enemy during the battle of Siffin, looks at the sky to see if the time for the noon prayers has arrived so that he can perform his prayers. Ibn 'Abbas asks him, "What are you doing?" The ".Imam responds, "I am looking at the sky to see if it is time for prayer in order to pray

Ibn Abbas says, "Is this the right time to perform prayers? At the present, war and fighting do not afford us the opportunity to perform our prayers." In response, the Imam states, "Why are we fighting them? We are at war with them for the sake of (prayer!"(۲

Indeed, prayer in the view of Imam 'Ali ('a) possesses such greatness that nothing becomes a cause for him to turn

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۷۰۳, sermon [khutbah] ۲۱۳, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٨٠, p. ٢٣ -٢

his back on it. In addition, prayer in his point of view is pleasure—gratification which is not comparable to any other satisfaction. In his view, prayer is overflowing with brightness and has no darkness, bleakness or grief and spiritual service is serenity .and purity in its entirety

In his perspective, fortunate is a person who sets foot on this boundless field [i.e. prayer] and soothes his soul with its life giving rays because the world becomes small and inferior in the eyes of a person who has set foot on this infinite domain and he will not be ready to quit prayer even at the time of fighting with the enemy because he desires everything else only for the sake of prayer and he sets his heart on prayer because it is a whispered word with his Lord—a conversation with Allah. In a letter to :'Uthman bin Hanif Ansari, Imam 'Ali ('a) writes

Blessed is he who discharges his obligations towards Allah and endures his hardship,“ allows himself no sleep in the night but when sleep overpowers him he lies down on the ground using his hand as a pillow, keeps wakeful along with those who fear the Day of Judgment, and are ever away from the beds, whose lips whisper in remembrance of Allah and whose sins have been erased through their prolonged beseeching for forgiveness. 'They are the party of Allah; be it known, verily the party (of Allah alone shall be the successful ones'." (٥٨: ٢٢)(١

c) The Philosophy of Divine Legislation for the Preliminaries of the Prayer and Factors for Attention in Prayer

With regard to the

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ٩٧۴, chapter [kitab] ۴٥, no. ١٥, trans. Fayd al-Islam -١

importance of prayer and its role in the well-being of the individual and the society, Allah, the Exalted, has set preliminaries [muqaddamat] in order for it to be performed

better and he has fixed etiquettes in order for his servants to remember Him more and conceive the importance of prayer. In order for man to perform a good deed, he first has to know that that deed is good and then after that think about that deed. We are aware of the goodness of many deeds, but we forget about performing them on .time

Therefore, in order for us not to forget prayer, Allah, the Exalted, has prepared preliminaries, for instance, he has legislated the call to prayer [adhan]. He has made prayer incumbent and has emphasized that it certainly has to be performed and not abstained from. In addition to this, He has set another form of worship by the name of adhan as a preliminary and reminder for the prayer and has ordered that it must be recited with a loud voice in order that the people be reminded about the scheduled .time of prayer and also to incite motivation for the performance of prayer

Although Qur'anic verses and hadiths which have been recorded in this regard all help man to perceive the importance of prayer, still when the time for prayer arrives and the people hear the sound of the adhan, attention is drawn to prayer and therefore this preliminary is a very effective factor for attracting

p: ۲۴۰

.attention to the importance of prayer

A lot of people for whom performing prayer on time has become a habit, often become heedless of prayer when they are busy with work and even forget that prayer time is due but, when they hear the loud sound of the adhan, willingly or unwillingly, they become attentive to the prayers. Therefore, the wisdom behind legislating the adhan and the emphasis on reciting it loudly is to remind people and make them attentive to prayer and consequently this is itself a means of inviting .others to perform acts of worship on time

:In regard to the virtues of performing prayer on time, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states

Whenever you want to perform an obligatory prayer, be like a person whose time to"

bid farewell with the world has arrived and he fears that he may not have the opportunity to say his prayers again. Perform your prayers at their earliest possible time."(1)

Likewise, it has been narrated from Ibn Mas'ud that:

"I asked the Prophet of Allah, 'What deed is more beloved to Allah?' He stated, 'The most beloved deed to Allah is performing prayer on time'."(2)

In addition, in order to encourage people more to perform acts of worship and to incite the spirit of devotion and servitude in people, Allah, the Exalted, has determined specific times and places to encourage and remind the people more about prayer.

For example, he has determined Thursday nights and Fridays for worship so that the essence of attention to Fridays and the

p: ٢٤١

١- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٨٠, p. ١٠.

٢- Ibid., p. ١٣.

fact that such a day is especially reserved for worship reminds man to perform acts of spiritual service and refrain from vain activities. Likewise, the virtues of the month of Dhu al-Qa'dah and the first ten days of the month of Dhu al-Hijjah are themselves a reminder of spiritual service to Allah because in these forty days Prophet Moses ('a), upon Allah's invitation, was busy with devotional service to Allah on the mountain of Tur. In this regard Allah, the Exalted, states:

وَوَاعَدْنَا مُوسَى ثَلاَثِينَ لَيْلَةً وَأَتْمَمْنَاهَا بِعَشْرٍ فَتَمَّ مِيقَاتُ رَبِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً وَقَالَ مُوسَى لأَخِيهِ هَارُونَ اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي وَأَصْلِحْ وَلاَ تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

"And we made an appointment with Moses for thirty nights, and completed them with ten [more]; thus the tryst of his Lord was completed in forty nights. And Moses said to Aaron, his brother, 'Be my successor among my people, and set things right and do not follow the way of the agents of corruption'."(1)

The forty days which Moses ('a) spent in worship on the mountain of Tur is popularly known as 'the forty days of the Jews' [arba'in-i kalimiyyah] and the spiritual wayfarers accord a lot of importance to it and have enumerated particular etiquettes and orders for it and during those days they mainly engage in worship; what is more, in our hadiths particular features have been mentioned for those forty days. For instance, it :has been narrated in a hadith that

Allah, the Exalted, makes springs of wisdom flow from the heart onto the"

p: ۲۴۲

.Surat al-A'raf ۷:۱۴۲ -۱

(tongue of a person who is sincere to Him for forty days."(۱

Rewarding effects for one who worships Allah for forty days or memorizes forty) hadiths and various things of this nature have been mentioned in numerous (.narrations

In addition, blessed days, festivals, nights of keeping vigil and the month of Ramadan have benefits so that making use of them and realizing their circumstances and timeliness may lead people to remember and worship Allah more so that man may remember his prosperity lies in devotional service and worship of Allah and it is not .befitting to turn back from Allah and set one's attention on other than Him

[The Mosque, Place of Ascension for Lovers of the Beatific Vision [Liqa' Allah

Besides the particular times, Allah has also determined special places for worship such that when people are directed towards those places and enter them, they automatically remember Allah and their devotional duties. It is for this reason that the existence of those places brings about more motivation and attention to Allah and .spiritual service to Him and, in general, mosques play this role

Though it is permissible for people to perform their prayers in all places except usurped places or places which for one reason or another are not permissible, Islam

has put a lot of emphasis on performing obligatory prayers in the mosque and being committed to going to the mosque, especially for people that are neighbors of a mosque. The Noble Prophet (S) states:

"The prayer of the neighbor of a mosque is not acceptable unless performed in the mosque."(٢)

In regard to the emphasis which

p: ٢۴٣

١- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٧, p. ٢۴٩.
٢- Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. ٣, p. ۴٧٨.

has been recorded in the hadiths, the religious jurisprudents have considered praying in the mosque for those people living in the neighborhood of a mosque as an emphatic recommendation [mustahabb mu'akkad] and abstaining from it as an undesirable act [makruh]. The late Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Kazim Yazdi states:

"It is abhorred [makruh] for the neighbors of the mosque to perform their prayers in other than the mosque without an excuse."(١)

Therefore, it is befitting for man to always be present in the mosque and perform his prayers in the mosque and to reflect on the status of the mosque and observing its etiquettes and honoring it and to think about the undesirability of not being present there. Also, one should realize that besides the rewards which have been mentioned for being present in the mosque and performing one's prayers there, Allah, the Exalted, has made man beholden to Him in regard to designating the mosque as His house and granting permission to His servants to be present there.

It is natural that all of the earth is the same in the viewpoint of Allah and no place is nearer than the other to Him, therefore the purport of this assertion that the Ka'bah and the mosque are Allah's houses is that Allah, the Exalted, deals with every one of these places in the same way that every one of us deals with their own houses. That is

to say, He has made these places for meeting, visiting and having familiarity with Him and

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.Urwat al-Wuthqa, p. ۲۱۱‘ -۱

.for admitting his servants and visitors so as to converse with them

Besides that, he accepts as a mosque or place of meeting and visiting Him every place which we want to set up as a mosque or place of meeting Him and this means that He has given us permission to determine the place of meeting and visiting Him and this is .the greatest mark of honor He has permitted for us

For this reason, the greatest role of the mosque is directing man’s attention to Allah and promoting the feeling of worship and servitude in them, even if various mosques are not equal from the perspective of position and rank and some mosques are more .important and loftier than others

Imam Khomeini, may Allah be pleased with him, says, “In the divine law [shar‘] of Islam, it has been recommended that it is better to perform prayers in the mosque and the best of all mosques is the Masjid al-Haram (the Sacred Mosque) and after that the Masjid al-Nabi (the Prophet’s Mosque) and after that the Mosque of Kufah and after that the Masjid Bayt al-Maqdas (Mosque of Jerusalem), and after the Mosque of Jerusalem comes the Friday Mosque [masjid jami‘] of every city and after that comes the local mosque and after the local mosque comes the mosque of the (bazaar.”(۱

:Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states

Four mosques are heaven’s palaces on earth; the Sacred Mosque, the Prophet’s“ (Mosque, the Mosque of Jerusalem and the Mosque of Kufah.”(۲

These four mosques are

۱- ۸۹۳ [mas'alah] Risalah Tawdih al-Masa'il, question.
۲- ۵۴۵ .Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. ۳, p.

so great and holy that it has even been recommended in some of the hadiths that people, from near and far, have to travel to visit them and spiritual retreat [i'tikaf] in them has a lot of divine reward. In regard to the virtues of the Mosque of Kufah, Imam al-Baqir ('a) states:

"If the people knew the Mosque of Kufah, they would prepare provisions and mount horses in order to reach it. One obligatory [wajib] prayer in this mosque has the divine reward equivalent to one hajj and one recommended [mustahabb] prayer in it has the divine reward of one 'umrah."(۱)

The Sacred Mosque is so great that the Ka'bah, the direction of prayer for the Muslims, is paced there and the Muslims are obliged to perform their prayers while facing the direction of this mosque and the Holy House. In addition, pilgrimage [hajj] to it for people who have become capable to discharge religious obligations is incumbent [wajib] and performing prayer in it has the divine reward of one million cycles [rak'ats] of prayer performed in other mosques. The Noble Prophet (S) states:

"One cycle [rak'at] of prayer in my Mosque is equivalent to one thousand cycles of prayer in any other mosque and one rak'at of prayer in the Sacred Mosque is equivalent to one thousand rak'ats in my Mosque."(۲)

In addition, in regard to the virtues of this holy Mosque, Imam al-Baqir ('a) states:

"[If] a person recites his incumbent prayers in the Sacred Mosque, Allah accepts all the incumbent prayers

۱- ۵۲۵ .Ibid., p.
۲- ۵۴۵ .Ibid., p.

which he has recited since the beginning of his puberty (age at which discharging religious duties becomes incumbent) up to the end of his life."(۱)

Besides these mosques, other mosques too have virtues, such that it has been narrated in a divinely inspired hadith:

"Allah, the Exalted, states, 'Verily my houses on the earth are the mosques which shine for the dwellers of the sky in the same way that the stars shine for the inhabitants of the earth. Blessed are those who have made the mosques become their houses. Happy is the servant who performs the ritual ablution in his house and then visits Me in My house. Beware! It is incumbent on the one visited to honor his visitor and to do good to him. Give glad tidings to the people who go to the mosques in the darkness of the night that they will have a bright light on the Day of Resurrection."(۲)

The Wisdom of Drawing People's Attention to Mosques

point

There is much wisdom in drawing people's attention to mosques which can generally be divided in two sections:

۱. Social Wisdom

When mosques become centers of social activities and several times a day or on Fridays people gather in them with grandeur, the society derives social, economic and political benefits. The Muslims enjoy these benefits and virtues and have derived them since the beginning of Islam.

During the course of Islamic history, the mosque has been the base and bedrock for alleviating intellectual, religious, political and economic problems, a central point for the spread and propagation of the rich culture of Islam,

.Ibid., p. ۵۳۶ -۱

.Ibid., vol. ۱, p. ۲۶۸ -۲

a place of learning the necessary social sciences and the central point for gathering military forces and soldiers for resistance and altercation with the enemy. In general, :we can mention at least four roles

a) A base for worship and remembrance of Allah

b) A base for the intellectual jihad: teaching and learning Islamic sciences

c) A base for Islamic unity and displaying the spirit of oneness and unity against hypocrites and known and unknown enemies

d) A base for gathering soldiers and other forces to be dispatched to the battlefield to fight against enemies

Personal Wisdom .۲

In addition to what has been mentioned, the mosque also has virtues for individuals. When an individual's route passes through the mosque and he finds himself present in it, he becomes more spiritually ready for worship. For this reason, the mosque is a .reminder for man to invoke and worship Allah

Even if a person were not thinking about Allah at all, once he passes by a mosque or dome or the minaret of the mosque, he becomes attentive that this is a house of Allah and immediately remembers his Lord. For people who desire to be loyal servants of Allah, strong awakening and alerting factors as well as more preparedness for spiritual service arise within and, for this reason, such factors are the best means of their perfection and therefore among the factors which result in a person remembering and worshiping Allah more is the existence of particular places for the .purpose of worship and spiritual service

It is

for this reason that it has been recommended that even in one's own house one place should be allocated as a place of worship and devotional service and one should be careful not to allow it to become unclean so that it constitutes a better atmosphere for .remembrance of Allah

:Imam al-Sadiq states

Imam 'Ali ('a) had set aside one room of medium size as a place of prayer. He used to" go with a young baby who would not sleep at night to that room to pray."(۱)

In addition to a prayer room in one's home, local mosques are also reminders that make man attentive to Allah and are among the means which Allah has provided for movement towards perfection and prosperity. It is for this reason that when a mosque is built in a local place, the people have to be encouraged to go there and the divine rewards which one earns for going to the mosque and even for every step which is taken to go the mosque have to be made known so that more eagerness for going the mosque arises. People have to be made aware that the mere fact of being present in a mosque results in an increase of blessings and the removal of sins. Imam :al-Sadiq ('a) states

The Noble Prophet (S) states, 'For a person who walks to the mosque with the" intention of participating in the congregational prayers, Allah, the Exalted, grants him seventy blessings as a reward for every step which he takes

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.Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. ۳, p. ۵۵۵ -۱

and his rank too will raise higher to this same level'."(۱)

Necessity of Understanding the Importance of Mosques and Their Etiquettes

point

A section of the Noble Prophet's (S) advice in this discussion is related to encouraging the believers to be present in mosques to derive spiritual benefits from them. Another part is related to the rules of conduct of being in a mosque, how one can derive worthwhile benefit from the mosque and what instructions and rules of behavior one must observe so that, Allah forbid, he is not deprived of blessings because sometimes a person is so afflicted by heedlessness and satanic temptations that he converts means of goodness and prosperity to means of misfortunate and wretchedness:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ بَدَّلُوا نِعْمَةَ اللّهِ كُفْرًا...

"Have you not seen those who pay back Allah's favor with disbelief..."(۲)

Regrettably, man is always faced with the danger of transforming Allah's blessings into retribution and converting the means of providence into factors of misfortune; therefore, after the people have been encouraged to go to the mosques and the rewards of every step which man takes towards the mosque have been enumerated, the believers are still warned to endeavor to make the most worthwhile benefit from mosques and to be mindful of why they have come to the mosque so that, Allah forbid, they do not get preoccupied with conversation about the world, buying and selling, the expensiveness and cheapness of things, the price of the dollar and land and other things of this nature and entirely forget about where they are and for what they

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۱- Ibid., vol. ۵, p. ۳۷۲.

۲- Surat Ibrahim ۱۴:۲۸.

have come!

It is for this reason that special etiquettes have been determined for the mosque the observance of which help prevent a person from being afflicted by heedlessness so that he is not deprived of the spiritual blessings of the mosque.

Before examining the sayings of the Noble Prophet (S), we find it necessary to point out that when man makes the intention to go to the mosque, it is worthwhile to make the utmost effort to know the rules of behavior of being in the mosque to the best of one's ability because the more one's knowledge increases, the more valuable one's .deeds become and observing etiquettes results in the proximity [qurb] of man to Allah

We have to know that when we are present in a mosque it means that we have entered the threshold of Allah, the Exalted, and we are in His presence and it is proper to set as criteria rules of conduct just as when we are in the presence of noble, elderly and respectable people and be overcome by humility, modesty and meekness. We must also be mindful that the greatness of elderly people is not comparable to the greatness of the Divine Essence of Allah and also the rules of conduct when we are in the presence of Allah are not comparable to the etiquettes of being in the presence of .noble people

With regard to what has been mentioned, we understand that there is no one that has the ability to truly

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observe correct rules of conduct in the presence of Allah. For this reason, we cannot perfectly observe rules of behavior in His presence; therefore, at least we have to pay close attention to our conduct at that time and perceive our weaknesses and shortcomings; this very bit of observation is enough to guide us to the door of Allah's benevolence. In a detailed hadith, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) thus explains the rules of (conduct of being in a mosque:(۱

Whenever you enter a mosque, know that you have called upon the great King and" Lord on whose sacred threshold none but the purified set foot and permission for meeting Him has not been granted save to the truthful and righteous. When you set foot on His divine threshold, know that if just a bit of inattention overcomes you, you are as if on a precipice on the brink of disaster and He is able to deal with you either .with His justice or His grace

Therefore, if He is kind to you and deals with you according to His blessings and mercy and accepts your meager acts of spiritual service, in return He will grant you great reward and benefit, but if He deals with you according to His justice, He will grant you what you rightly deserve and will reject your acts of worship no matter how many .they may be and He will deal with you as He wishes

For this reason at His threshold, acknowledge your incapacity, guilt and need

p: ۲۵۲

.Misbah al-Shari'ah, p. ۱۰, section [bab] ۱۲, Markaz Nashr Kitab, pocket book -۱

because you have the intention of worship and intimacy with Him. Tell your secrets to Him and know that He knows the apparent and hidden things of all creatures and there is not a thing hidden from Him and in His presence resemble the most needy of creatures, remove from your heart whatever prevents you from being attentive to Him and tear away the curtain that is between you and Him because He does not accept save the purest and sincerest of hearts and ponder well in which book your .name will finally be recorded

Then, if you taste the sweetness of invocation and conversation with Him, feel pleasure and drink from the cup of his mercy and benevolence, this is a sign that He has received you favorably and accepted you as His guest and you have to know that .you are worthy of serving Him

Therefore, enter the Mosque because permission and security has been granted to you. If it were other than this, you would be like one who has been left desolate because all doors have been closed to him and he is incapable of doing anything. Know that whenever He conceives that one has truly sought refuge in Him, He will look upon that person with eyes of mercy, clemency and compassion and will make that person succeed at that which is pleasing to Him because He is the Most Generous and He loves to be magnanimous towards those servants who stand abject and forlorn

:in His presence seeking His favor and satisfaction. He Himself has stated

أَمَّن يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ...

Is He who answers the call of the distressed [person] when he invokes Him and‘ (removes his distress...’”(۱

:In order to encourage us to be present in the mosques, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! A good and pure word as well as every step you take to the mosque is“ ”.charity

The word charity [sadaqah] is a term that is employed much in Islamic culture and its desirability is clear: when it is said that a deed is charity, it is meant that it has extraordinary value and divine reward. Therefore, to make known the loftiness of a deed, it is said that the deed is sadaqah (charity). One thing that has been called .charity is good and commendable words that we tell to others

This is to make us not construe such an act as of little value and to bear in mind that when we say words that are helpful and make others more attentive to Allah and bring about abstention from ugly deeds, or even say words that cause an unhappy believer to become happy and bring about hope and release one from hopelessness and sorrow, those words are desirable to Allah and they are tantamount to worship if .they are said with the intention of obedience and worship of Allah

Initially, the Noble Prophet (S) states that every good word is charity and follows this by saying that every

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۱- ۲۷:۶۲ Surat al-Naml.

step taken towards the mosque is also charity and afterwards the central point of his discussion is the mosque. It is natural that once man becomes apprised about the

purport and meaning of this saying of the Noble Prophet (S) and he believes that every step he takes to the mosque is charity and has divine reward and benefit, he .will make haste to go to the mosque no matter how far it is from his house

Going to the mosque will not be hard for him and he will not find any pretexts for not going to the mosque no matter how far it may be because he knows that the further !the mosque is, the more divine reward he accrues

Afterwards, in regard to the rules of conduct about being present in the mosque, the :Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Every person who accepts the invitation of the caller towards Allah and“ ”.makes goodly endeavor to go to the mosque, Allah will reward him with paradise

Apparently, the meaning of ‘the caller towards Allah’ is the person who makes the call to prayer [mu’adhdhin] because he invites the people to prayer on behalf of Allah and his duty is to call the adhan with a loud voice and announce that it is time for prayer so that the people gather in the mosque to perform acts of worship. If a person accepts his invitation, that is to say, he moves towards the mosque after hearing the adhan, he causes

p: ۲۵۵

.the mosque to thrive and prosper, and his reward is paradise

Abu Dharr asks, “O Prophet of Allah! May my father and mother be your ransom, how ”?can I develop the mosque and make it thrive

:The Noble Prophet (S) states

Development of the mosque means that) There should be no voices raised in it,)“ falsehood and frivolity should be refrained from, buying and selling should not take place, and all vanity must be abstained from; otherwise, do not blame anyone except ”.yourself on the Day of Resurrection

In these sentences, the Noble Prophet makes Abu Dharr aware of four rules of

:conduct

Abstinence from shouting and talking loudly in the mosque (۱

Because the mosque is a place of worship and all too often speaking loudly diverts the attention of other people such that they do not manage to mentally concentrate on prayer and other acts of spiritual service. In addition to that, speaking loudly in a gathering is construed as lack of manners and it is befitting that man behave properly and with dignity in the mosque and refrain from deeds which are not befitting of .proper human conduct

Therefore, one of the instances of establishment of a mosque is that man has to behave with grace and dignity in it and try to observe silence and if he wants to talk, he has to speak softly in order not to disturb other people who are busy either performing the prayers or other acts of devotion. In regard to refraining from talking :loudly in the mosque, the Noble Prophet (S) states

When fifteen habits"

p: ۲۵۶

become prevalent in my community, disaster afflicts them. One of those habits is (talking loudly in the mosque..."(۱

Refraining from false and frivolous conversation .۲

The mosque is the house of Allah and a place of worship and it is blameworthy to embark upon false and vain talk in the mosque because this is a kind of disrespect to the mosque and failure to observe its status. It is like a person who goes to visit someone and embarks upon praising the enemies of his host or brings up topics which .hurt the host, or he undertakes other acts that do not please his host

Without the least doubt, this is opposed to the proper rules of behavior and humanity. A visitor has to observe and respect the rights of the host and behave in a manner which pleases him. Allah is not pleased by his servants discussing topics and matters

which are harmful and endanger their prosperity. In addition, doing deeds which are vain and discussing vain things in the mosque results in the prestige, honor and philosophy of the existence of mosques being forgotten because when people sit in the mosque for the purpose of uttering futile words, they forget they are in the mosque and the important reason they are there.

3. Abstaining from buying and selling in the mosque

Buying and selling in the mosque and also deeds which are construed as professions and careers such as blacksmithing, carpentry and cosmetology as well as other jobs are forbidden in the mosque. It has been narrated in a hadith that Imam al-Sadiq ('a) stated:

"Do

۱- Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p. ۵۲, section [bab] on the Maxims of the Noble Prophet (S) [mawa'iz al-nabi wa hikmah].

not allow your mosques to become places of buying and selling..."(۱)

The bazaar is a place for business—buying and selling and engaging in professions and careers—which the society needs, but the mosque is especially reserved for worship. Worldly activities like buying and selling must not take place in them. It is natural that if a mosque also becomes a place of buying and selling as well as other transactions, it loses its feature of being a reminder and prompter [about Allah] and not only would it not remind man about Allah, but it would make him more attentive to the world and the acquisition of income.

The mosque is a place of invocation and remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, and Islam emphasizes the point that this holy place must not be used for any activity that diverts the attention to anything other than Allah so that the ground for invocation and spiritual service is completely prepared. Therefore, it is forbidden to do activities

which have professional or career aspects such as computing and carpentry in a :mosque. It has been narrated in a hadith that

The Prophet of Allah found a man sharpening his spears in the mosque and stopped" (him from doing so. He stated, 'The mosque was not built for such deeds'."(۲

:Also, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states

Amir al-Mu'minin ('a) drove a barber who was busy with hairdressing out the mosque" (with a whip."(۳

Abstaining from frivolous deeds in the mosque .۴

The Noble Prophet (S) states that one must not utter vain and inappropriate words nor perform frivolous deeds while in

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.Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. ۳, p. ۵۰۷ -۱
.Ibid., p. ۴۹۶ -۲
.Ibid., p. ۵۱۵ -۳

the mosque. One must behave well in order to please Allah, the Exalted, and earn divine reward and perfection. One must refrain from all deeds which have no benefit in the mosque, and in addition refrain from futile words and deeds in all places :because among the attributes of a believer is that he abstains from frivolous deeds

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ * الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِی صَلاَتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ * وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ

Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayers and avoid what" (is vain."(۱

The believer should avoid frivolous deeds altogether and not let his life pass in vain, but because the majority of people do such deeds to a greater or lesser extent, or at least do neutral deeds [mubah] which have no benefit for them, a person should at least try to abstain from doing such deeds in the mosque and set the mosque

particularly for worship so that the honor of the mosque is preserved and a person derives more spiritual benefit from it and also so that the role of the mosque as a .reminder and guide towards Allah is preserved

In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) states that people will blame only themselves on the Day of Resurrection if they do not observe the correct rules of conduct in the mosque. That day man will realize with regret what great benefit he could have derived from the mosque. Every person could have made the most of those very moments when he was seated

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.Surat al-Mu'minun ۲۳:۱-۳ -۱

in the mosque to cultivate his hereafter, but alas not only did he not derive benefit, on the contrary, he may have performed deeds which ruined his hereafter. At that time, .man will be overcome with indescribable regret

Virtues of Being Present in the Mosque for Worship

O Abu Dharr! Every breath that you take earns a higher level in paradise for as long" ".as you are in a mosque

After we have left our homes, gone to the mosque, observed correct rules of conduct and performed our prayers, we are still encouraged to stay in the mosque and not immediately leave after our prayers. We should try to stay longer because for as long as we are in the mosque, Allah grants a higher level for every breath that we take. If we recite the Qur'an, supplicate Allah, and worship or prostrate to Allah, we attain the divine reward for these deeds and in addition to that, mere breathing in the mosque results in Allah granting us higher levels in paradise for the reason that this breathing was done with the intention of obeying Allah and was done because we remained in the mosque with the intention of pleasing Allah and every deed which is done with the intention of pleasing Allah and glorifying him is considered to be worship and every kind of worship results in earning a higher level in the garden of eternal bliss.

However, we have to bear in mind that the divine reward is granted to us as we ,breathe at the time of worshiping

p: ۲۶۰

.not when we breathe as we discuss worldly affairs in the mosque

It has been said that staying in the mosque and breathing there is recommended [mustahabb] and has divine reward, but this does not mean that we have to forsake all affairs and duties and take recluse in the mosque. It is possible that there arises a situation where two recommended deeds occur simultaneously and get in the way of one another; in this case, we should select that deed which is recommended more .than the other

Sometimes, it is likely that an obligatory deed coincides with a recommended deed; in this case, we must select and discharge the obligatory deed and give up the recommended deed. For this reason, although it has been advised to discharge recommended deeds as much as possible, it does not mean if it occurs synchronously with an obligatory deed that we should forgo the obligatory deed and perform the .recommended one

When we mean to encourage a deed and mention its goodness, that goodness is for that deed in itself; that is to say, without any coincidence and concurrence with another deed. Therefore, it is likely for a statement or explanation about a particular type of worship to have an apparent generalized meaning, but based upon its coincidence with another kind of worship or an obligatory deed in a specific case, a .recommended deed loses its desirability and ought not to be performed

Therefore, if it has been recommended that we should try to stay

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in mosque, it does not mean that we have to forsake our studies as well as academic discussion and other more necessary duties and spend our days in the mosque to invoke Allah. We cannot forsake obligatory lessons and academic discussion for the

sake of staying in the mosque or reciting recommended invocations and performing recommended acts of worship because these cannot take the place of lessons and academic discussion and a recommended deed can never take the place of an obligatory deed. Compulsory duties have much more significance and we cannot give them up on the pretext of sitting in the mosque and reciting invocations.

"And the angels send blessings upon you and record ten good deeds for every breath that you take and wipe out ten sins from you."

That which has been mentioned is the benefit of sitting in the mosque because the mosque is a place of spiritual service where man is attentive to Allah. It is for this reason that in the hadiths the mosque has been introduced as the marketplace of the hereafter and it has been emphasized that man has to try to enter the mosque before everyone else and leave it after everyone else has left.

"The Noble Prophet (S) asked Gabriel, 'Which place is more beloved in the eyes of Allah?' Gabriel responded, 'The mosque, and the most beloved person is the one who enters the mosque before everyone else and leaves it after everyone else'."(١)

"O Abu Dharr! Do you know for what instance

١- Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. ١٢, p. ٣۴۵.

the following verse was revealed? 'O you who have faith! Be patient, stand firm and close your ranks, and be wary of Allah so that you may be felicitous.'(١) I said, 'No, may my father and mother be thy ransom.' The Noble Prophet (S) stated, 'It was revealed in regard to waiting for prayer after prayer.'"

The Most Beloved Servants of Allah

In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"O Abu Dharr! Allah, the Exalted, states, 'My most beloved servants are those who

love and cherish one another; those whose hearts are attached to the mosque and engage in seeking forgiveness at dawn. Those are people on account of whom I desist from afflicting the dwellers of the earth with divine retribution.'"

Allah, the Exalted, removes affliction and divine retribution from the society on account of His most beloved servants whose hearts are attached to the mosque and are always waiting to go to the mosque to engage in invocation of Allah in the midst of the night. On the Day of Resurrection, these beloved servants will attain high ranks and uncountable divine rewards in paradise, but one of the effects of their presence in the society is that they repel divine affliction.

The benefit and reward that is earned by man due to affection with going to the mosque is not confined only to divine reward that will be granted to him in the other world. In this very world, too, the believer earns a great deal of ethical, scientific, instructional, social, political and material benefits and rewards. In

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۱- Surat Al 'Imran ۳:۲۰۰.

regard to some of the invaluable and constructive benefits of going to the mosque, Amir al-Mu'minin ('a) states:

"(At least) one of the following eight benefits is earned by a person who frequently goes to the mosque: ۱) a believing brother seeking the course of Allah derives benefit from him; ۲) he learns new things; ۳) he understands verses of the Qur'an; ۴) he listens to speeches which guide him to the truth; ۵) he gains the mercy which he awaits from Allah; ۶) he listens to sermons which protect him from being misled towards perdition; ۷) he refrains from sin due to a pious and fearful spirit which permeates his heart as a result of frequently going to the mosque; ۸) he abstains from sin due to modesty felt before his believing brothers whom he has become acquainted with in the mosque."(۱)

At the end of this section, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

O Abu Dharr! Sitting in the mosque is not beneficial except in three states: performing“ the prayers while reciting the Gracious Qur’an, remembering Allah while reciting ”.invocations and when engaged in learning

All emphasis and recommendation on going to the mosque frequently and enumerating the spiritual effects and material benefits of being present in the mosque and also enumerating the divine rewards of the soul which man earns as a result of being in the mosque is meant to encourage man to set the mosque as the center of his relationship with Allah and a place for the acquisition of

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۸۳, p. ۳۵۱ -۱

spirituality and use of the mosque for his spiritual perfection and prosperity; however, if a deed is not related to the hereafter, man must refrain from performing it in a mosque. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) divides positive deeds which are befitting of the mosque into three areas and considers performance of other :actions in the mosque to be null and void

a) Man has to be busy performing prayers during which or after which he should .recite the Qur’an

b) Invoking Allah, the Exalted, with his tongue and/or in the heart and he should set his .attention on Allah

c) In the mosque one should be occupied with learning sciences and culture and the mosque should be the centre of propagating knowledge and spreading awareness in .which case spiritual levels raise and become a cause of eternal bliss

With regard to this section and what the Noble Prophet (S) has said in connection with the significance of the mosque as well as the need to frequently go to them and the virtues of worship as well as spending time in the mosque and the need to make the best use of our time while in a mosque, and the need to grant more significance to the

mosque, this House of Allah, and try to make the mosques thrive and develop and fear lest the mosques complain on the Day of Resurrection on account of our :inattention to them, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) has said

The mosques complained about those neighbors"

of yours who do not go to the mosque. Allah sent down inspiration, 'I swear upon My honor and glory, I will not accept even one cycle [rak'at] of prayer from them and I will not establish justice among them. My mercy will not encompass them and in heaven (they will not be near Me nor be My neighbors."(۱

Lesson ۳۵: The Status Of Piety, Asceticism and Self-discipline

point

The fulcrum of this section of the Noble Prophet's (S) words is piety [taqwa]. There has been a great deal of discussion in various cases and ethical books in regard to piety, and we too have discussed this topic a lot. In this section, we will embark upon explaining and discussing the words of the Noble Prophet (S) and some of the basic and fundamental issues which are related to piety but, to begin with, we will explain .the concept of piety

[The Concept of Piety and Its Relationship with Divine Fear [Khawf

The word 'taqwa' literally means protecting or guarding oneself from danger and it does not make any difference what that danger might be, but when the word taqwa is employed in ethical or Qur'anic discussions it does not mean protecting oneself from every kind of danger; in fact, it denotes danger which is directed at man's prosperity and hereafter although in the Qur'an, as well, taqwa has been employed to mean :guarding oneself from the danger which other human beings direct at an individual

لاَ يَتَّخِذْ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِن اللّهِ فِى شَىْءٍ إِلاَّ أَنْ تَتَّقُوا مِنْهُمْ تُقَاةً...

The faithful should not take"

.Wasa’il al-Shi‘ah, vol. ۳, p. ۴۷۹ -۱

the faithless for allies instead of the faithful, and whoever does this he shall have nothing of (the guardianship of) Allah, but you should guard yourselves against them, (guarding carefully…”(۱

Even so, when discussion concerns ‘taqwa’ or the verses of the Qur’an and the hadiths regard piety and the pious, the purport is piety before Allah and the discussion concerns people who fear danger in regard to their religious and spiritual affairs and try to protect themselves from danger because they have fear in regard to their religion. Therefore, the fountainhead of piety [taqwa] is fear and dread of danger and after feeling fear and dread, man takes action to remain safe from or at least stay far .from danger

In the Qur’an, sometimes the Day of Resurrection has been mentioned as pertaining to piety because on that day the dangers and results of reprehensible deeds will :become apparent. In this regard, Allah, the Exalted, states

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْماً لاَ تَجْزِى نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئاً ...

And be on your guard against the Day when no soul shall compensate for another“ (soul in the least.”(۲

And sometimes someone has been mentioned pertaining to piety because He :punishes man for the sins which he commits, for instance

... وَاتَّقُوا اللّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

(And be wary of (your duty to) Allah, and know that Allah is with the pious.”(۳“

This means that one must fear the danger arising from divine retribution that will be directed at him. For this reason, fear of Allah means fearing the

.Surat Al 'Imran ۳:۲۸ -۱

.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۲۳ -۲

.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۹۴ -۳

.punishment which derives from man's reprehensible deeds

In any case, in regard to the meaning of piety [taqwa], fear [khawf] is implicitly implied in its meaning on account of its origin, and for this reason it can also interpreted as fear of Allah. Sometimes, piety refers to a habit or second nature which arises in man as a result of repeated abstinence and refraining from sin. When man abstains from .sin once, it is not said that he is pious

However, when he constantly abstains from sin so much so that keeping aloof from sin becomes his habit and second nature, others say that he is pious. For this reason, sometimes piety is applied to the fountainhead of a deed, which is fear of Allah, and sometimes it is applied to a spiritual and divine state which arises in man as a result of .repeated abstinence from sin

Imam 'Ali ('a) defines piety [taqwa] as a spiritual and divine state which prevents man :from sin and deviation and counts fear of Allah as one of its effects

O creatures of Allah! Certainly piety has saved the lovers of Allah from committing" the unlawful and put His dread in their hearts so that their nights are passed in wakefulness and their days in thirst. Therefore, they achieve comfort through trouble and abundant watering through thirst. They regarded death to be near, so hastened (towards (good) actions. They rejected their desires and kept death in sight."(۱

:Elsewhere, he states

The responsibility for what I say is guaranteed"

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۳۵۳, sermon [khutbah] ۱۱۳, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

and I am answerable for it. If a person takes past experience (given by Allah to

and I am answerable for it. If a person takes past experience (given by Allah to peoples) as a mirror for the future, he is prevented by piety from falling into doubtful (actions."(۱)

Indeed, piety is the greatest asset which helps man seek the path of prosperity as he traverses the course of life which is filled with fears and hazards. Piety aids man on this sea full of dangerous and turbulent storms with horrendous waves of affliction .and sin. Without piety man cannot traverse this way

The Importance of Piety and Ways of Attaining It

point

The significance of piety and the amount of emphasis which has been laid on it makes it clear that fundamentally religion, the sending of prophets and revealing of divine books have been so that human beings can find the way toward salvation and prosperity as well as traverse that path with diligent endeavor to attain the original .goal of creation which is infinite divine mercy in the hereafter

Therefore, the more effective piety is in attaining this goal, the more significant it is. In other words, because the reality of the prophetic mission and divine legal codes is showing mankind the way of salvation and prosperity and Allah, the Exalted, on account of His infinite mercy, has made it incumbent upon Himself to guide people, in the divine verses and that which has reached people by means of the saints [awliya'] of Allah, effort has been made to train people in such a way that they act upon divine instructions, and because man's deeds often

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.Ibid., p. ۶۶, sermon [khutbah] ۱۶, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

spring from sensual origins, that is to say, man's volitional deeds often arise from his desire and the bulk of his will is found in fear and hope, the prophets ('a) and their successors have made use of the method of awakening fear and hope in man and .making him aware of the true goal of his creation

After understanding the notion of piety [taqwa] and its significance, it is necessary to understand the ways of obtaining piety. We will briefly mention three ways of :attaining piety

One's attitude about the future .۱

With attention to the fact that piety is the main provision for man's eternal life, love of the self by way of foresight and the intellect's judgment that man has to struggle for his future and attain that which is beneficial for his eternal life should be awakened. :The Qur'an states

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

O you who have faith! Be wary of (your duty to) Allah, and let every soul consider" what it sends ahead for tomorrow and be wary of (your duty to) Allah. Allah is indeed (well aware of what you do."(۱

Attention to knowledge and awareness of Allah in regard to deeds and conduct .۲

:This method has also been mentioned in the above verse

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

".And be wary of (your duty to) Allah. Allah is indeed well aware of what you do..."

That is to say, in regard to Allah's attribute of knowing whatever you do, fear Him and have piety. This is another method of instruction

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۱- Surat al-Hashr ۵۹:۱۸.

which Allah has chosen to help man to acquire piety because people have special psychological characteristics and one of these is that when one knows and pays heed to the fact that there is someone watching his deeds and Allah sees whatever he does and is aware of his good as well as bad acts, he refrains from doing objectionable

.deeds

In reality, Allah has created man in such a way that he feels ashamed to do bad deeds in the presence of someone who knows the deed is bad. For this reason, if man constantly reflects on the fact that he is in the presence of Allah and that not only are the outward aspects of his deeds being witnessed but Allah is also aware of that which is in his heart, he feels ashamed of even the corrupt thoughts and fantasies .which arise in heart

The more man respects someone as great, the more he desires to be cleaner and purer in the eyes of that person. In other words, he wants his personality to be respected. In regard to Allah's awareness of the deeds of man, the Glorious Qur'an :states

أَوَلاَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ

Do they not know that Allah knows whatever they hide and whatever they" (disclose?"(١

Realization that piety is beneficial even in the world .٣

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا * وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لاَ يَحْتَسِبُ...

And whoever is careful of (his duty to) Allah, He shall make a way out for him from" (whence he shall not reckon..."(٢

And also

.Surat al-Baqarah ٢:٧٧ -١
.Surat al-Talaq ۶۵:٢-٣ -٢

:Imam 'Ali ('a) states

Know that whoever adopts piety and fears Allah, Allah will show him the way out of"

(sedition and corruption and the way leading from the darkness to the light."(1)

In the first way of attaining piety [taqwa], we have been told to think about what we are saving for tomorrow. In this method, it is said that one has to reflect about the benefits piety has for one in this world. In the entire course of one's life, whether we like it or not, we are afflicted by seditions, sorrows, troubles and obscurities. If we want Allah to help right in this world and liberate us from wandering and .predicaments, we must adopt piety

In places where a pious man has to ascertain and discern the way, Allah grants him a light which makes everything manifest so that he may see the correct path. It is for this reason that sometimes we see very complicated and puzzling problems occur which cannot be solved by people with strong minds and sharp intellects whereas people lacking strong minds and intellects can solve such problems with the help of Allah because they have adopted a pious life. In reality, it is the help and aid of Allah .which helps some of his servants who have adopted piety

Therefore, one of the ways to encourage people to attain piety is introducing the positive effects which result from it because man is often only prepared to act on something or avoid what he loves when

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۱- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۶۰۲, sermon [khutbah] ۱۸۲, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

he knows that doing so makes him attain good results. Therefore, if we want to encourage other people to attain high values and to refrain from things which have spiritual harm for their hereafter, we have to do something which incites motivation in them. In order for people to overlook the pleasures of sin, they need to have .motivation

In order for them to easily wake up at night for the sake of worship, they have to have motivation. When the call of duty necessitates that they have to go to the battlefield and put their lives at risk as well as perform other good deeds for the pleasure of

Allah, the Exalted, a person has to have motivation and the best way to incite motivation in him is to make him realize the benefits and good effects which result from his deeds because man's natural disposition seeks those effects.

Man, at whatever level of knowledge and faith, seeks goodness and, if his knowledge and faith are weak, he at least desires the good of the world. All people want abundant and lawful sustenance, and they want to earn it without exerting a great deal of effort. It is for this reason that one of the methods that has been employed in the Glorious Qur'an and also in hadiths to encourage piety is mentioning the worldly benefits of piety.

One of these benefits is that if a person is pious, Allah, the Exalted, shows him the way to escape and free

himself from hardships and problems because sometimes a person finds himself in an impossible situation with no means of escape and does not see any solution for his problems and becomes obliged to bear with patience the bitterness and hardships of life.

Allah, the Exalted, promises that if a person has piety, the way of deliverance from hardships and problems will be made available. This is a very great promise which Allah gives to man and encourages him to choose a way whose fruits and results will be liberation from hardships and problems.

During the period of the struggles of the Muslim people of Iran and the Islamic movement, sometimes very hard conditions would arise and no one knew the way of rescue from those conditions, but because this revolution was founded on the basis of piety and for the sake of spreading divine piety in the Islamic society and bringing about a spirit of servitude and the rule of Allah, Allah would grant His assistance and inspire the way of deliverance at every juncture and in the end the people would find a way out of the hardships. An example of this is the twenty second day of the month of Bahman:(۱)

When the satanic regime announced martial law and fiercely stopped the people from coming out of their homes in order to execute its satanic plans, Imam Khomeini (may Allah be pleased with him) with his foresight and sharp-sightedness and, without the least doubt, divine inspiration, ordered the people to

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١- The eleventh month of the Iranian calendar; the Iranian Islamic Revolution took place in Bahman ٢٢nd, ١٣۵٧ AHS.

overlook and turn a blind eye to the military government and come out of their homes to occupy the streets and as a result of this the enemy's conspiracy was frustrated and the victory of the revolution became certain.

If Allah, the Exalted, invites us to acquire piety, it is because in this way we attain great results and benefits both in this world and in the hereafter. We attain high levels in heaven and spiritual perfection in the hereafter and also worldly good, but Allah does not derive any benefit from our piety:

لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهَ لُحومُهَا وَلاَ دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَى مِنكُمْ كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

"It is not their flesh or their blood that reaches Allah. Rather it is the piety that reaches Him. Thus, has He disposed them for your benefit so that you may magnify Allah for His guiding you, and give good news to the virtuous."(١)

What connects us to Allah is piety which is the cause of our perfection and ascendancy and because Allah wants us to attain perfection, He encourages us to endeavor at attaining piety by enumerating the benefits of piety in this world so that in the end we may also attain heavenly reward. In reality, He enumerates for us the sensible and readily available advantages of piety in order to encourage us to attain piety even if the reality is that heavenly rewards are not, as we wrongly imagine, on credit and their occurrence is near

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.Surat al-Hajj ۲۲:۳۷ -۱

.and certain but we do not conceive them as such

A Glance at the Levels of Piety

Keeping in mind that all spiritual perfections have levels, piety, being one of the highest spiritual perfections, has various gradations also. From one perspective :scholars of ethics have mentioned three stages of piety

Protecting the soul from the punishment of hell and from living in eternal divine .۱ retribution by doing commendable deeds and having correct beliefs; this is because piety connotes safeguarding the soul and preventing oneself from opposing Allah and does not only mean abstaining from sin. It is for this reason that piety pertains both to .the beliefs and to other than the beliefs

Piety in regard to the beliefs denotes that man has to meditate about the fundamentals of belief and not deviate from them and endeavor to be honest and firm both in words as well as action in regard to beliefs. Man has to truly become faithful to his Lord and have certainty that the other unreal gods and objects of worship are false. He has to truly believe all existents are creations of the real Object of Worship and a created thing must be submissive and obedient to its Object of Worship and prostrate on the ground in humility to Him and never turn his back on .Him

After observing piety in relation to Allah, the Exalted, he also has to abide by piety in regard to the prophets and their successors too and willingly follow their orders with .all his heart and soul

The second level .۲

p: ۲۷۶

of piety is that, in addition to renunciation of sin, man also has to abstain from dubious and objectionable acts [makruh] even though they are not considered to be sins and

.are not punishable

The third level of piety is that in addition to protecting the body parts and limbs from .٣ forbidden [muharramat], objectionable [makruhat] and dubious acts [mushtabahat], man must guard the heart from that which is not pleasing to Allah and also not think about sin and disagreeable deeds but try to reflect about Allah and that which is .pleasing to Him

It is natural that no matter how much one worships, he will not derive any benefit from his acts of devotion if he does not pay a blind eye to sin. Therefore, in order for us to derive benefit from our acts of worship, we first of all have to protect their bounds and limits and refrain from deeds that are displeasing to Allah. It has been :narrated in a hadith that

One who refrains from forbidden things [muharramat] is the most virtuous of" (people."(١

A Glance at the Effects of Piety

point

Another issue that is worth dealing with is the effects of piety. Some of these effects :include

The effects and role of piety in the perception of truths .١

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَاناً...

O you who have faith! If you are wary of Allah, He shall appoint a criterion(٢) for" (you..."(٣

The faculty of cogitation which makes us aware of realities becomes sharper and works better when one does not act in an unrestricted and immoral way and observes correct standards of

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۷, p. ۶۴ -۱
.That is, knowledge that will enable one to distinguish between truth and falsehood -۲
.Surat al-Anfal ۸:۲۹ -۳

behavior because perversion inhibits the intellect from functioning correctly. In more technical terms, the origin of unrestrictedness is in the animal instincts, whether in regard to food or sexual matters or whether related to the faculty of anger, and if a person does not recognize any bounds and limits in regard to these aspects, he .strengthens them

A person, whose devotion is to food, is like a sheep whose only concern is herbage. Without the least doubt, such a person cannot manage to bolster his more human aspects and intellection is one of the human faculties which, in the case of becoming overly devoted to food, becomes either weak or suspended. In the same way, the thoughts and activities of a human being whose preoccupation is sexual passion revolve around his lusts and he is like a animal immersed in passion from morning .until night

Such a human being chases after scenes which serve his passions and hears and speaks words which only serve his animal instincts. This person only studies books which discuss carnal issues and pleasures of the flesh. Without the least doubt, such a person cannot be expected to reflect about divine knowledge, to conceive the truth and distinguish right from wrong. In the same way, a person who is like a predator only strives to strengthen his faculty of anger and his only concern is domination and subjugation of other people. For this reason, the focal point of such a man's thoughts is his animal instinct of

.subjugation and domination

The exigency of piety is that man ought to control his animal faculties and in this case the faculty of rationalization and intellection controls and reigns. Now, if the meaning of furqan (criterion) in the above-quoted verse is the intellect—because the intellect

distinguishes between right and falsehood—we infer that by restricting the control of animal instincts and letting the faculty of thought take charge of affairs, and by subjugating the rest of the faculties by means of the intellect, we will attain the .criterion

The other possible interpretation of furqan (criterion) is that furqan is the light higher than the intellect because the intellect exists in all human beings; it exists more in some people and less in others. Therefore, by knowing Allah and having divine fear [khawf], man observes bounds and limits in his life and with the help of the piety which appears in him, he attains the aptitude for Allah to grant him the light of the criterion .[furqan] which is a confirmer of the faculty of intellection

The role of piety in clear-sightedness .۲

There are a great deal of Qur'anic verses and hadiths which denote the fact that one of the invaluable benefits of divine piety is clear-sightedness and the opening up of :apertures of knowledge for man. In this regard, Allah, the Exalted, states

... وَاتَّقُوا اللّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللّهُ...

(And be careful of (your duty to) Allah and Allah shall teach you..."(۱..."

This verse emphasizes this point that piety is very effective in increasing knowledge .and awareness which comes from Allah, the Exalted

In

.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۸۲ -۱

:a hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states

Springs of wisdom flow from the heart onto the tongue of a person who for forty" (days sincerely purifies himself for Allah."(۱

In reality piety wipes out the rust covering the heart of man and removes the curtains and veils which the devil have established over man's heart and then man perceives :true knowledge clearly. Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) states

If it were not for the devils which constantly move around the hearts of the children“ (of Adam, they would witness the spiritual realm of the heavens.”(٢

There are many such sayings in our religious manuscripts and they indicate the fact that piety and purity are effective for spiritual insight and foresight and indirectly warn us that worshiping the soul and losing the reins of piety result in the darkening of .the soul and dullness of the heart and diminish spiritual insight

The role of piety in captivating and securing the love of Allah .٣

بَلى مَنْ أَوْفى بِعَهْدِهِ وَاتَّقى فَإِنَّ اللّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

Yes, whoever fulfills his commitments and guards (against evil)—Allah indeed loves“ (the pious.”(٣

It is clear what benefits will be directed at the person whom Allah loves. Once man loves some individual, he always tries to win their pleasure and he is not remiss in this .regard and tries to do what the other person desires at whatever cost

Now, when Allah who is the Almighty, has all perfections and is All-powerful loves someone it is clear what He can do for that person. Often times, we love someone and we would like to do something good for him

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٧٠, p. ٢۴ -١

.Ibid., vol. ۵٩, p. ١۶٣ -٢

.Surat Al ‘Imran ٣:٧۶ -٣

but we are unable to on account of lacking facilities and means. However, Allah, the Exalted, is able to do all that He wishes and all things are within His will and power and

.He can do whatever He wants for one He loves

Not having fear and sorrow .۴

:As Allah, the Exalted, states

... فَمَنْ اتَّقَى وَأَصْلَحَ فَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

(Then those who are pious and righteous will have no fear, nor will they grieve."(۱..."

Receiving divine help .۵

:In regard to granting invisible aid to the pious, Allah, the Exalted, states

بَلَى إِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَيَأْتُوكُم مِنْ فَوْرِهِمْ هَذَا يُمْدِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ آلافٍ مِنْ الْمَلاَئِكَةِ مُسَوِّمِينَ

Yes, if you are steadfast and pious, and should they come at you suddenly, your Lord" (will aid you with five thousand marked angels."(۲

:It has been narrated in a hadith

Verily Allah, the Honored and High, confirms the believer with His spirit and whenever" the believer does good and acts piously, that spirit draws near to confirm him and it (leaves him when he sins and transgresses."(۳

Acquisition of dignity and proximity [qurb] to Allah .۶

In regard to the role of piety in man's acquisition of dignity and proximity [qurb] to :Allah, the Qur'an states

... إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

Indeed the noblest(۴) of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious among you...." (Indeed Allah is All-knowing, All-aware."(۵

Deliverance from problems and hardships .۷

In regard to the role and effects of piety in delivering man from problems and hardships, there is much discussion and verse twelve of Surat al-Talaq has been quoted. Here we will quote another verse which is related

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١- Surat al-A'raf ٧:٣٥.

٢- Surat Al 'Imran ٣:١٢٥.

٣- Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. ١١, p. ٢٣٥.

٤- Or: 'the most honored.'

٥- Surat al-Hujurat ۴٩:١٣.

to a pious society:

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَى آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِن السَّمَاء وَالأَرْضِ ...

"If the people of the towns had been faithful and pious, We would have opened to them blessings from the heaven and the earth."(١)

٨. The acceptance of deeds

In regard to the role and effects of piety in making man's deeds acceptable, Allah, the Exalted, states:

... إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللّهُ مِن الْمُتَّقِينَ

"...Allah accepts only from the pious."(٢)

In this verse Allah, the Exalted, makes us aware of the point that if we want our deeds to be accepted, we have to have piety. Of course, if we discharge our religious and obligatory duties by observing their correct outward conditions, we are no longer duty-bound to discharge 'divine duties.'

For instance, if out of laziness we hurriedly perform our morning prayer after the sky has become bright before the rising of the sun, we are not duty-bound to perform the compensational morning prayers but the fulfillment of our duty does not imply that

our deed has risen to the level of acceptance and the level of acceptance of duty is higher and has its own special qualities one of which is the act accompanied by piety. Therefore, that effect which brings about loftiness of deeds (acceptance of deeds) in .the eyes of Allah is piety and abstinence from opposing Allah

O Abu Dharr! Strive harder for piety rather than only performing deeds because an" action done with piety is not insignificant. How can a deed which is accepted by Allah ?be insignificant

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.Surat al-A'raf ۷:۹۶ -۱
.Surat al-Ma'idah ۵:۲۷ -۲

".'Allah, the Exalted, states, 'Allah accepts only from the pious

Whether in regard to the world or in regard to the hereafter, people do not strive with the same ambition and there are a lot of differences among them. In regard to the sustenance of life, some have few aspirations and exert effort from morning to night .just for the sake of earning bread and butter and they are content with just that

It is not true that this group of people has selected the course of abstinence, but their expectations are few and their ambitions are limited. Some people have higher ambitions and they are not content with less and strive to earn enormous benefits in this world and limited things do not content them. Other people have even higher aspirations than this group and they do not pay any heed to material and sensual .benefits such as food and the stomach

For them, what is important is attaining social position, honor and dignity. If they choose to do something, it is not with the intention of acquiring a lot of money, but because a certain job is suitable to their status and circumstances and results in granting honor and dignity to them. They do not do work that is not suitable even if they would earn more money from it. The ambitions of this group of people are high .and dignity and honor is valuable for them

Likewise, in regard to the hereafter, believers have different ambitions. Some only aspire

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to be saved from hell and are only content with being redeemed. Some people are not content with this and seek to attain various levels of paradise. Some others have such high ambitions that they do not even look at hell and heaven but aspire to be beloved of Allah, the Exalted, and gain proximity to Him.

Indeed, those who have known Allah and have knowledge of the high value of honor before Him would be pleased and happy with this honor even if heaven and its blessings did not exist. The important for them is that Allah grants them merit and honor and they do not lay any importance upon the blessings of paradise. In the Qur'an, Allah, the Exalted, states:

... إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ...

"...Indeed the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious among you..."(1)

Allah does not state that paradise and its blessings are granted to the most pious among you or that such a person is delivered from the fire of hell, but He states that the pious has attained nobility and honor before Allah and is valuable in the sight of Allah. It becomes clear that earning the honor of Allah and becoming beloved in the sight of Allah is higher than deriving benefit from heaven and its palaces and eternal favors.

Now, how can such an individual who has attained this level of knowledge and awareness be encouraged to attain more piety? Can it be said to him that you

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1- Surat al-Hujurat ۴۹:۱۳.

have to increase your piety so as to earn more worldly reward? This human being has

.put all these things aside and attained higher levels

Can it be said to him that you ought to increase your piety so as to derive benefit from the palaces of paradise and its pure virgin women as well as be delivered from hell? It is obvious that not one of these things will motivate him to increase his piety because .he has already turned a blind eye to all of them

He has reached a level of perfection and completion and his aspiration has reached its peak such that he desires nothing but the beatific vision [liqa' Allah] of Allah and winning divine love and honor. The only thing which can encourage such a person to increase his piety is the promise of meeting his Lord and attaining the pleasure of the .Beloved

We have to bear in mind that the Gracious Qur'an has not chosen one method of training people, but it has advanced a particular method suitable for every type of person. It is for this reason that the Glorious Qur'an has various methods of instruction which are not confined to the saints [awliya'] of Allah and those who have attained high levels because the Qur'an is a book of guidance and invites all human .beings to perfection and edification of character

For this reason, it has also mentioned benefits and set forth rewards for people who have a lower level of

ambition and are traversing the course of perfection so that they may not remain without any benefits. It has promised them material benefits, paradise and deliverance from hell but the promise of divine honor and attaining the pleasure of Allah and becoming beloved by Him is offered to those who have reached perfected .levels of knowledge

The Quality of Accountability and Other Characteristics of the Pious

Another subject worth discussing is the attributes of the pious. After comprehending the greatness and value of piety, we have to know the qualities of the pious so as to

:learn the way of attaining piety. In this regard the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! No man is considered pious until he takes an account of himself more“ strictly than a partner who is accounting for his partner in order to find out by what means that which he eats, drinks and wears is acquired. Is it earned in a legitimate ”?[halal] or illegitimate [haram] way

The Noble Prophet (S) regards the attribute of accountability as one of the qualities of the pious and states that a pious person is one who is not indifferent and negligent and holds himself accountable. If he acquires food, he observes whether he has acquired it in a legitimate or illegitimate way. If he acquires clothes, he is careful of where the money for buying those clothes comes from. Likewise, he considers and examines his incentive for acquiring a house—is it for him to better serve Allah, prepare more comfort for his household, engage in spiritual devotion in a

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better way as well as be able to bring up his children in a good environment or does he ?acquire a house in order to boast to other people and show off to them

When he intends to spend his money, he considers whether Allah will be pleased or not and also whether there is another more obligatory duty for which he can spend his money. In any case, he weighs all aspects and holds himself accountable. A person ought not to be such that he gains money from whatever source and spends it on every whim and fancy. He has to observe whether the facilities he brings to hand are earned in a legitimate way or not. If they are earned illicitly, he has to return them to .where they belong and not cause himself problems

Sometimes, a person becomes so corrupted by the world and entangles himself to such an extent in worldly affairs that he cannot liberate himself later. He becomes so preoccupied with seeking opportunities and enormous wealth that he even sells his dignity to acquire things, not caring who or what is sacrificed along the way. He does .not care in what manner he earns his money

If we have not attained high levels of piety so as to abstain from dubious [mushtabah] and reprehensible [makruh] acts, then at least we ought to refrain from forbidden [haram] things and observe the bounds and limits of halal and haram lest there is someone else's right in the money we

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bring to hand. Every believer has certain bounds which he must not transgress. A butcher has to observe certain divine laws and a civil servant follows other laws and .all people must see to it that other people's rights are not trampled underfoot

A worker has to be sure that he fulfills his duties during working hours and does not engage in leisure activities and smoking cigarettes as well as talking to this and that other worker. Some believers are very diligent in their acts of worship and imagine that merely worshipping and keeping vigil at night is enough for them and when they are in their offices, they content themselves with only sitting behind their desk and not .working because they imagine that keeping vigil at night compensates for laziness

Government workers and those working for the private sector have to know that their working hours belong to their employers and they do not have the right to use that time for personal purposes. Even the telephones that are in their offices cannot be .exploited for personal use. Unfortunately, we do not pay heed to these points

Likewise, using money from the public treasury must only be used for public purposes and in the public interest. Therefore, if we are obliged to be working during certain specified hours, we have to be careful not to spend those hours for personal purposes. When we have been hired to do a certain job, we have no right even to perform prayers unless

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we initially agree on this condition with our employer and we have his permission to .do so

In addition, any money which is earned by means of assassinating the characters of

other people or by means of flattery and bootlicking is illicit.

In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"O Abu Dharr! Allah does not take notice of where in hell He casts a man who does not take notice of how he earns his living."

Man has to be cautious and observe the method by which he earns his income and reflect on where his income comes from. He must not earn his money by means of flattering people and he must be concerned whether his assets and his work are legitimate or not because if they are not Allah will cast him into hell.

"O Abu Dharr! Every person who desires to be the most honored among the people must be pious."

"O Abu Dharr! The most beloved person in the sight of Allah is he who remembers Allah most and the most honored among you is the one who is more pious and the furthest from divine retribution is the one who fears Allah more."

(As we have already mentioned, fear [khawf] is one of the foundations of piety and without it piety is not attainable.)

"O Abu Dharr! The pious are those who abstain from things that are not generally abstained from, so as not to fall into dubious matters."

It has been said that there are levels for piety and that some people only

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abstain from prohibited things while others go a step further and refrain from things that are doubtful as well, and still other human beings have reached such a high level that they keep aloof from objectionable [makruh] things lest they may mistakenly fall into error. Thereafter, in order to explain the superior level of piety, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"O Abu Dharr! He who obeys Allah, the Exalted, has remembered Him even though his

prayers and fasting are few and he recites the Qur'an little."

Self-restraint and Asceticism in the Words of the Noble Prophet (S)

Thereafter, in regard to self-discipline, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"O Abu Dharr! The foundation of religion is self-restraint [wara']—restraining from sin and dubious matters—and its pinnacle is obedience to Allah. O Abu Dharr! Engage in self-restraint so that you may become one of the most devout of worshippers, for the best part of your religion is self-restraint."

Originally, the word wara' had the meaning of restraining oneself from the unlawful or avoiding the prohibited completely; then, later it was used more generally to mean self-restraint, and its meaning is very close to the meaning of piety. However, predominantly self-restraint [wara'] is used to refer to a habit of abstinence and asceticism, which is an inner quality, while piety is more generally applied to the prerequisites of deeds, the praiseworthy deeds themselves and also to the inner habit.

In order to explain the role of wara' in restraining a person from sin and deviation, Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"There is no distinction higher than Islam; no honor more honorable than

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piety [taqwa]; no asylum better than self-restraint [wara']."(۱)

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"Adopt piety [taqwa] and protect your religion with self-restraint [wara']."(۲)

Restraining oneself from prohibited things is the most important factor for attaining prosperity and high spiritual levels and escaping from decadence or falling into the whirlwind of perdition. In reality, self-restraint from sins and doubtful acts is the most difficult level of worship and devotion to Allah and it is for this reason that Imam al-

:Baqir (‘a) states

(Self-restraint [wara‘] is the most difficult form of worship.”(۳“

Again bearing in mind the role of self-restraint in making the other constituents of :worship sound, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states

Worship which is devoid of self-restraint [wara‘] is devoid of goodness and“ (benefit.”(۴

Also, regarding the necessity to accompany worship with self-restraint, the Noble :Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! The excellence of knowledge is more than the excellence of worship.“ Understand that even if you perform the prayers so much that you bend like a bow and fast so much that you become as thin as an arrow, these will not benefit you ”.unless they are accompanied by self-restraint

:He also states

O Abu Dharr! Those people who practice self-restraint and asceticism [zuhd] in the“ ”.world are truly the saints [awliya’] of Allah

Zuhd literally means lack of inclination and reluctance and is contrasted with affection, appetite and inclination to the world; that is to say, one has no inclination and .attachment to the world and is content with a simple life

It is necessary to say that asceticism and abstinence that

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۲۶, wisdom [hikmat] ۳۶۳, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱
.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۰, p. ۲۹۷ -۲
.Ibid., p. ۲۹۸ -۳
.Ibid., p. ۳۰۷ -۴

is desirable in Islam is when man adopts a life of simplicity and refrains from

ostentation in order to discharge his duties better and turns a blind eye to the glamorous and glittering manifestations of life. It is self-evident that this kind of conduct is not a result of conceiving the world and its manifestations as filthy nor is it due to a conflict between the world and the hereafter and it is also not on account of .shirking social obligations

Asceticism in Islam is adopted for the sake of discharging duties in a better way, to hold sway over excessive inclinations and extreme attitudes and in order to control fondness with the world and infatuation with outward material manifestations of life. This helps restrain man's over-desirous soul and rid a person of a state of self-loss .vis-à-vis the manifestations of the life of this world

Therefore, asceticism in Islam is not incongruous with having wealth and power and in reality an ascetic is a person that is not in love with the outward manifestations of the world more than he loves the Truth and Allah and he does not sacrifice divine goals for the sake of worldly aims. On the contrary, he has set the hereafter as the .main goal and this world as a means and pre-requisite for attaining the next

With regard to what has been mentioned, the difference between asceticism [zuhd] and monasticism [rahbaniyyah], which is prevalent among Christians and Jews, becomes clear. Monasticism includes quitting the world

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and escaping from societal responsibility and this ideology is incongruous with the .spirit of Islam

From the viewpoint of Islam, the outward aspects of life including money, children, leadership, etc. are all means of perfection and development and are blessings of Allah and deriving appropriate benefit from them and observing balance in making use of them, in addition to bringing about prosperity in this world, generate bliss for .man in the hereafter

Correct use of the manifestations of the world means that man should not consider

the world and its outward aspects to have value in and of themselves rather they are blessings that must be used for the purpose of attaining perfection and prosperity in the hereafter. Allah, the Exalted, states:

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاکَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الآخِرَهَ وَلاَ تَنْسَ نَصِيبَکَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا...

"By the means of what Allah has given you, seek the abode of the hereafter, while not forgetting your share in this world..."(1)

According to Islam, everything in the world that has acquired the color of existence is good, and Allah has not created anything bad. For this reason, neither is the world with its manifestations bad nor is interest in them which arises from natural tendencies that have been placed in man. The Noble Prophet (S) states:

"Asceticism and abstinence [zuhd] in the world does mean that you have to turn the halal (permitted) into haram (forbidden) for yourselves or disperse your wealth. Asceticism means that you should not rely more on what is in your hands than that

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1- Surat al-Qasas ۲۸:۷۷.

which is with Allah."(1)

Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"O people! Abstinence [zuhd] is to shorten the desires, to thank for bounties and to avoid prohibitions [maharim]..."(2)

In addition to what has been said, the Glorious Qur'an reproaches monasticism and considers it to be an innovation which was introduced into religion as a result of the incorrect idea that there is incongruity between religion and the world. The Qur'an states:

ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلَى آثَارِهِم بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الإِنجِيلَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَهً وَرَحْمَهً وَرَهْبَانِيَّهً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا کَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلاَّ ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا فَآتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ وَکَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ

Then We followed them up with Our apostles and We followed [them] with Jesus son" of Mary, and We gave him the Evangel, and We put in the hearts of those who followed him kindness and mercy. But as for monasticism, they innovated it We had not prescribed it for them—only seeking Allah's pleasure. Yet they did not observe it with due observance. So We gave to the faithful among them their [due] reward, but (many of them are transgressors."(۳

One day the wives of 'Uthman ibn Maz'un came to the Noble Prophet (S) and complained that her husband fasted all day and kept vigil all night. He also was not at the service of his family during the day and did not sleep with his wife at night. After hearing this, the Noble Prophet (S) angrily got up and went to see 'Uthman who was busy

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.Nahj al-Fasahah, p. ۳۵۸, hadith ۱۷۱۲ -۱

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۸۰, sermon [khutbah] ۸۰, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۲

.Surat al-Hadid ۵۷:۲۷ -۳

performing his prayers. When he saw the Noble Prophet (S), he shortened his prayer. :The Noble Prophet told him

O 'Uthman! Allah did not raise me to preach monasticism [rahbaniyyah] and shunning" the world but to preach a moderate and easy religion. I fast, pray and sleep with my (wives."(۱

(Lesson ۳۶: Forbearance, Moderateness and Trust in Allah as Stated by the Prophet (S

point

Sentences which were examined in the previous session centered on piety and self-restraint. In this section of the Noble Prophet's (S) hadith, in addition to self-restraint and abstinence, forbearance and the station of trust in Allah have also been :mentioned. The Noble Prophet (S) stated

O Abu Dharr! Whoever on the Day of Resurrection is devoid of three things is a loser."“ Abu Dharr asked, “May my father and mother be sacrificed for you. What are those three things?” In response, the Noble Prophet (S) stated, “Self-restraint [wara‘] with which he abstains from forbidden things, forbearance [hilm] with which he encounters ”.fools, and good morals with which he coexists harmoniously with people

Self-restraint [wara‘] is the first quality that will cause loss for a person on the Day of Resurrection if not obtained. In the previous section, we said that usually self-restraint is applied to a habit of piety and merely abstaining from one sin cannot be considered to be self-restraint. The Noble Prophet's (S) expression in this section confirms that interpretation and clearly explains that self-restraint is applied to a spiritual nature or habit which inhibits man from committing sin; for this reason, the characteristic of self-restraint is that it prevents

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٢٢, p. ٢۶۴ -١

man from committing forbidden acts and it is natural that a man that is not endowed with this attribute becomes tainted by sin and consequently meets with defeat and .failure and ends up in hell

The Lofty Status of Forbearance

The second attribute that is necessary to be endowed with and protects man from loss and failure on the Day of Resurrection is forbearance [hilm]. It has been asserted that forbearance means controlling the self and not allowing incitement of the faculty of anger. Without the least doubt, patience and forbearance are commendable and invaluable attributes and can be considered to be soldiers of intellect, and anger [ghadab]—which is in opposition to forbearance [hilm]—can be considered to be a .soldier of ignorance

It is well known that man has been advised not to make decisions, discipline someone nor take action on something while in a state of anger because he will likely later

regret his deeds. That is so because man's intellect does not function well when he is in a state of wrath. It has been recorded in a hadith that Qanbar was insulted by an ignorant man and he wanted to respond when Imam 'Ali ('a) stated:

"O Qanbar! Ignore your defamer so that you may please Allah, the Merciful, and so that you may anger the devil and thus punish your enemy because retribution for him is not worse than ignoring and turning a blind eye to him. I swear upon the Allah who split the seed and created human beings that a believer

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does not please his Lord more than by having patience and forbearance and he does not annoy the devil more than by repressing anger and he does not punish a fool more than with silence."(۱)

Elsewhere, Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"No honor is like knowledge, no power is like forbearance."(۲)

With regard to the loftiness of the quality of forbearance and its invaluable role in preserving proper social relations and reciprocal respect, it is necessary for every individual in the society to be endowed with it and to strive to attain it, especially religious scholars who occupy the role of reforming and training people. When a religious scholar, who is a reformer and a guide of the people, retaliates vis-à-vis the unbecoming conduct of the ignorant, he renders his work ineffective.

Therefore, we must accompany our knowledge with forbearance in order to have a desirable outcome and be patient and enthusiastic when explaining religious truths. In regard to the fact that the viability of knowledge is not feasible without forbearance, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"I swear upon Allah in whose hands my life lies, no two things have joined and supplemented one another better than forbearance and knowledge."(۳)

Truly, forbearance is in the highest category of personal perfection after knowledge

and, as we have already stated, knowledge without forbearance is not beneficial. It is for this reason that in some instances when knowledge is praised, forbearance too is praised and in reality forbearance and knowledge are mentioned as two invaluable elements which are conjoined

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۱, p. ۴۲۴ -۱
.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۱۳۹, wisdom [hikmat] ۱۰۹, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۲
.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲, p. ۴۶ -۳

:and supplementary. The Noble Prophet (S) states

O my Lord! Free me from want on account of knowledge and beautify me with" (forbearance."(۱

Without the least doubt a person who beautifies himself with patience and forbearance has adopted the most merciful and compassionate method in critical circumstances when enmity and hatred become inflamed in people's hearts. Forbearance helps one to extinguish the fire of hatred and enmity and does not allow the carnal self to gain control. Instead, it compels the self to extinguish the fire of .hatred

In history we observe that despite the different kinds of torture and torment which the polytheists inflicted on the Noble Prophet (S) and his companions, after the conquest of Mecca the Noble Prophet (S) displayed utmost forbearance by forgiving .the defeated polytheists

At that time, the enemies expected the Noble Prophet (S) to slaughter them and even some of the standard-bearers of Islam who were seeking revenge addressed Abu Sufiyan saying, "Today is the day of bitter fighting and revenge." However, the Noble :Prophet (S) forbade this vengeful slogan and substituted it with the motto

Today is the day of mercy and good relations. Today, Allah has granted honor to the "

Quraysh."(٢)

Without any doubt, man is forced by necessity to have relations with other people in his life. Allah, the Exalted, has created him is such a way that he is left with no option but to accept social life and if he wants to live alone and far from other people, he will be

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١- Ibid., vol. ٩٧, p. ٣۶٨.

٢- Ibid., vol. ٢١, p. ١٠٩.

deprived of a great deal of the blessings of this world, he cannot progress towards perfection and perhaps he cannot even continue living his life.

For this reason, he is compelled by necessity to accept social life and have relations with other people in order to continue his life and also to seek perfection and ascendancy. On the other hand, every person is different with regard to mentality, personality, morals, understanding and knowledge and therefore people encounter others who are unwise and foolish in conduct. Sometimes, a person comes in contact with foolish individuals whose improper behavior is insulting and demeaning.

Not all people have reached the peak of human perfection and knowledge nor do they possess the intelligence to compel themselves to behave in a suitable and courteous manner. It is for this reason that sometimes a person must interact with others that are not self-built who, due to lack of knowledge or existence of family problems and pressures, behave improperly and neither observe proper rules of conduct nor respect others.

It is natural that if a person retaliates in tit for tat manner and becomes angry quickly when faced with such people, differences increase and negative consequences arise from those differences. In addition, time is wasted, the person loses his peace of mind and he cannot attain his goals in life. Therefore, in order for man to derive great benefit from the world and remain safe from its blights, he has to develop the spirit of

forbearance in order

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.to control himself when faced with such people

In addition to the fact that human beings ought to practice self-restraint in order to avoid committing sin, they also have to be forbearing in order to derive benefit from social life and not create losses because if man gains distance from the society, he becomes deprived of the benefits of social life. If man wants to derive benefit from the society for the sake of securing the life of the hereafter, in order to remain sound .when confronted by unwise people, he must have self-restraint and forbearance

He has to practice forbearance so that when he is confronted by demeaning and insulting circumstances, he pays a deaf ear and turns a blind eye to them so that he can carry out his duties and derive benefit from the society and unbecoming conduct does not become a hurdle on the road to perfection. In the words of hadith: "Have ".forbearance in order to repel the ignorant

In contrast to the common impression that ignorance is only applied to a lack of acquired knowledge, ignorance is also absence of wisdom, foolishness and stupidity. For this reason, ignorance includes behaving in an unwise, foolish or senseless manner and this sense has been employed in many verses of the Qur'an. For :example

... وَإِلاَّ تَصْرِفْ عَنِّی کَیدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَیهِنَّ وَأَکُنْ مِن الْجَاهِلِینَ

If You do not turn away their schemes from me, I will incline towards them and" (become one of the ignorant."(١)

Yusuf (Joseph) is saying, if Allah

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.Surat Yusuf ١٢:٣٣ -١

does not turn away the deceptive schemes of the women around him, he might commit an unwise deed. In such verses interpreting ignorance [jahl] as the lack of knowledge is incorrect and furthermore in most cases lack of knowledge is an excuse. Whereas this word is mostly used for reproach and in inexcusable instances such as :when Allah reproaches the brothers of Joseph

هَلْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ بِيوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ جَاهِلُونَ

(Did you realize what you did to Joseph and his brother when you were ignorant?"(١"

It is doubtless that the brothers of Joseph were not ignorant of their deeds and actions. They knew who Joseph was and they were aware that their deeds were not good but still behaved in a senseless manner and their deeds were foolish; that is to .say, their deeds were not consistent with sound reason and intellect

In addition, when Prophet Moses ('a) told his people that Allah has given you orders to .slaughter a cow, they asked him if he was deriding them

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُوا بَقَرَةً قَالُوا أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُوًا قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنْ الْجَاهِلِينَ

And when Moses said to his people, 'Indeed Allah commands you to slaughter a cow,'" they said, 'Do you take us in derision?' He said, 'I seek refuge in Allah lest I should be (one of the ignorant!'"(٢

In this verse also ignorance means foolishness, not lack of knowledge. Prophet Moses ('a) did not seek refuge in Allah from lack of knowledge but from

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١- Surat Yusuf ١٢:٨٩.
٢- Surat al-Baqarah ٢:٦٧.

deficiency of wisdom, imprudence, and behavior in opposition to wisdom and truth. In the book "Usul al-Kafi" one section is dedicated to 'knowledge' and another to 'reason and ignorance' and this was done because in that section ignorance is opposed to

reason not knowledge, and as we have said, often ignorance is used to mean foolish and unwise conduct and is used as the opposite of reason not knowledge.

Forbearance, Befitting of the Saints [Awliya'] of Allah

In his advice the Noble Prophet (S) warns that sometimes in personal life man is confronted by unwise people whose behavior is foolish, and he recommends that the best method of interaction with those who lack manners is forbearance so that one may both derive good benefits from the society as well as free himself from becoming entangled in quarrels and adopt a sound path despite enmity and thus become beloved by Allah:

"Allah loves a person who is forbearing, modest, chaste and high-minded."(1)

The Gracious Qur'an explains the way of fighting a foolish enemy in the following way:

وَلاَ تَسْتَوِی الْحَسَنَهُ وَلاَ السَّیئَهُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِی هِیَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِی بَیْنَکَ وَبَیْنَهُ عَدَاوَهٌ کَأَنَّهُ وَلِیٌّ حَمِیمٌ * وَمَا یلَقَّاهَا إِلاَّ الَّذِینَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا یلَقَّاهَا إِلاَّ ذُو حَظٍّ عَظِیمٍ * وَإِمَّا یَنْزَغَنَّکَ مِن الشَّیطَانِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِیعُ الْعَلِیمُ

"And not alike are good and evil. Repel [evil] with what is best. [If you do so,] behold, he between whom and you was enmity, will be as though he were a sympathetic friend. But none is granted it except those who are patient, and

1- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۱۷۴.

none is granted it except the greatly endowed. Should a temptation from Satan disturb you, seek the protection of Allah. Indeed He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing."(1)

This is the method which the Qur'an introduces in regard to encountering stubborn and foolish people and is one of finest and best ways of instruction for the reason that every person who behaves badly expects the injured person to retaliate, but when he sees the offended person encounters him in a good and constructive manner which is

contrary to his expectations, he becomes transformed and as a result of the pressure of his conscience feels inferior and consequently changes his unacceptable ways of .conduct

It is for this reason that we see that a great deal of people used to surround the Noble Prophet (S) seeking to be in his presence. On the basis of the words of Allah, the reason for this was the attributes of mercy and forbearance which the Noble Prophet :(S) possessed

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ...

It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and" hardhearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them and (plead for forgiveness from them, and consult them in their affairs..."(٢

And also in regard to the logic of the conduct of the righteous servants of Allah, the :Qur'an states

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ

١- ٣٤-٣٦:٤١ Surat Fussilat.

٢- ٣:١٥٩ Surat Al 'Imran.

الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا

The servants of the All-Beneficent are those who walk humbly on the earth, and" (when the ignorant address them, say 'Peace."(١

A story has been narrated that there once lived a wise man who invited his friend to his house. The wise man brought some food for his friend, but the badly behaved wife of the wise man came forward and took the food from the wise man's visitor, insulting .the wise man. The visitor got very angry and left the wise man's house in protest

The wise man followed his friend and when he got close to him, said, "Do you

remember one day when we were busy eating some food and a chicken came forward and spoilt the whole food and neither of us became angry? Imagine that this badly behaved wife of mine is like a chicken!" After hearing this, that man swallowed his anger and said, "The wise man is right. Patience and forbearance are a cure for every pain."

They have also narrated that one day Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba ('a) was confronted in an alley in Medina by a man from Syria who was heavily under the influence of the inimical propaganda of Bani Umayyah and began insulting Imam al-Hasan ('a). After patiently and quietly bearing his words Imam al-Hasan ('a) said, "I think you are a stranger in this town and you are under the wrong impression. If you have nowhere to sleep, you are welcome in my house. If you are indebted,

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۱- Surat al-Furqan ۲۵:۶۳.

I will repay your debts. If you are hungry, I will give you food to satiate you."

The conduct of Imam al-Hasan ('a) was very surprising to that man and a dramatic change overtook his heart. He was so impressed by Imam al-Hasan ('a) that he said, "O son of the Prophet! If before this meeting they had asked me who the worst men under the sky were, I would have answered that you and your father are the worst people on earth, but now I believe that you and your father are the best people on earth."

A perfect man who has attained the loftiest levels of spiritual service and devotion to Allah is not expected to behave otherwise and if they did not handle ignorant and foolish people with patience and forbearance, they would not have been fit to be the representatives of Allah on earth.

It has been narrated in regard to Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi that a man brought a letter to him in which he was insulted by the enemy. In that letter, Khwajah had been called "Dog son of Dog."

In response to such insults, Khwajah kindly and wisely said, “It is not true that I am a dog, because a dog has four legs, fur and it barks while I neither have four legs nor have I fur nor do I bark. A dog has long nails and I have short nails, a dog is short and bent while I am tall and straight. I laugh

but a dog does not. I think but a dog does not. In short, none of the characteristics of the dog are found in me. So, none of the claims of the writer of this letter are true.”

Explaining the social benefits of patience and forbearance, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states:

“The first reward the exerciser of forbearance acquires is that others become his helpers against the ignorant.”(۱)

Moderateness and the Difference between It and Lenience and Compromise

The third quality which, if attained, protects man from loss and failure on the Day of Resurrection is moderateness in his dealings with others. Moderateness [mudara] includes soft-heartedness, gentle behavior, sociability, friendliness and tolerance of the bothersome behavior of others. There are a lot of hadiths praising moderateness and its benefits in the hereafter. One of those hadiths is the Noble Prophet’s (S) saying:

“Moderateness with the people is half of faith.”

He also stated:

“There are three things which if they are lacking in man, his deeds do not become complete: self-restraint [wara‘] which discourages one from sin, good ethics with which one coexists with others in moderation, and forbearance [hilm] which repels the unwise and foolish.”(۲)

Elsewhere, he considers tolerance to be on par with discharging obligatory and incumbent duties:

We the prophets have been charged to practice moderateness with the people in the"
(same way that we have been charged to perform obligatory duties."(۳

Man is always confronted by individuals who for various personal motives behave improperly. Sometimes, jealousy or other unbecoming traits impel one to behave in such a manner that he hurts other human beings. What is

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۱- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۱۷۹, wisdom [hikmat] ۱۹۷, trans. Fayd al-Islam.
۲- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۱۷۹.
۳- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۵, p. ۵۳.

under discussion is how must one behave and when confronted by such people? If a person retaliates and conducts himself in a tit for tat manner when faced with the unwise and foolish, he usually complicates the situation.

In such circumstances, he should abstain from retaliation and adopt moderateness. He has to try to overlook the inappropriate behavior of the antagonists and practice tolerance and not react very fast. In some instances, a person has to turn a blind eye to the unsuitable behavior of other people and not confront them with enmity despite their malice. In addition to that, one may have to help them and be at their service. If during his life a person is such that he is moderate and patient with malicious antagonists, he can reap very desirable results and succeed in life.

However, if he desires to retaliate for every hostile act perpetrated against him or for every one of his rights that is abused, he will be wasting his energies and time in addition to torturing his own heart and losing his own peace of mind. In addition to all this, he would only be increasing enmity and grudges. For this reason, the best way to deal with inimical human beings is to be moderate because moderation when dealing with other people is the way of the intelligent and wise as well as being a key to righteousness and salvation.

"Be moderate with others because that is the key to righteousness and it is the

(method of the wise."(۱

What is worth discussing is that sometimes moderateness is mistakenly interpreted to mean lenience and compromise. Compromise is making concessions with those who have deviated and with the opponents of the truth and denotes that a person is negligent when propagating the truths of the religion of Allah or not protesting when he witnesses deviations. In this regard, Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"By my life there will be no regard for anyone or slackening from me in fighting against one who opposes right or gropes in misguidance..."(۲)

Elsewhere, while complaining about those of weak determination of his time who refrained from the truth and chose the way of compromise and ease, Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"Know that—may Allah have mercy upon you—you are living at a time when those who speak about truth are few, when tongues are loath to utter the truth and those who stick to the right are considered lowly. The people of this time are engaged in disobedience. Their youths are wicked, their old men are sinful, their learned men are hypocrites and their speakers are sycophants. Their young people do not respect their elders and their rich men do not support the destitute..."(۳)

As we can observe Imam 'Ali ('a) has reproached compromise, weakness and sycophancy with the people who oppose the truth and he perceives flattery as a mean and reproachable quality and a cause of social corruption and collapse of the pillars of honor and glory.

In the society, there are calm and imperturbable people

۱- Ghurar al-Hikam, p. ۴۷۹, trans, Muhammad 'Ali Ansari.

۲- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۸۷, sermon [khutbah] ۲۴, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

.Ibid., p. ۷۲۹, sermon [khutbah] ۲۲۴, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۳

who do not show any reaction to the events taking place around them and they pay .no attention to the problems of others and the problems of religion and society

This insensitive group of people has a lazy, weak and indulgent spirit and they desire to be in a place where they can recline and remain apathetic enjoying ease and joy. If sometimes war arises and they are called upon to go to the battle front, they pull .themselves aside and take flight to secure places

Naturally, this group has justifications for their deeds because no one is prepared to admit that he is a bad person that does bad deeds; on the contrary, they even devise apparently good excuses for their actions. Usually, their justification is that they have to be moderate with the enemy and should not to be strict because harsh reactions .are fruitless

Sometimes, they refer to hadiths which assert that the cause of prosperity is moderateness with other people. If this way of thinking were allowed to spread in the society, fighting would never take place, no movement would occur and the way of jihad would be closed. As has been explained, this kind of negligence seeks to justify lenience and compromise and is created by self-indulgent people who seek to shirk social responsibility and avoid war and fighting under the auspices of religious law. This is an extremely undesirable pretext which brings about unfortunate results and .the Glorious Qur'an explicitly reproaches it

The Prophet's (S) Lack of Lenience in Regard to the Polytheists

In the early days

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of Islam, time and again the polytheists used to ask the Noble Prophet (S) to show leniency in regard to his religion so that they too could be flexible in their conduct. In reality, they wanted the Noble Prophet (S) to make concessions so that they might obtain privileges from him and the result would be the Noble Prophet (S) coming to

terms and acceding to their demands. They wanted him, just like worldly leaders, to relinquish firmness in accomplishing his goals and to show compromise and pliability :with his enemies. In regard to their demands, Allah states

فَلاَ تُطِعْ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ * وَدُّوا لَوْ تُدْهِنُ فَيُدْهِنُونَ

So do not yield to the rejecters, who are eager that you should be pliant, so that they“ (too) may be pliant.”(١)

Definitely moderateness and tractability vis-à-vis the enemy and making concessions in regard to enforcing the laws of Allah, propagating divine values and waging war against corruption is not desirable. This is in fact compromise with the enemy, and it is for this reason that Allah strongly prohibits this action and asks the Noble Prophet (S) :to strictly enforce His laws on this matter

وَأَن احْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلاَ تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَاحْذَرْهُمْ أَنْ يفْتِنُوکَ عَنْ بَعْضِ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْکَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّمَا يرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يصِيبَهُمْ بِبَعْضِ ذُنُوبِهِمْ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِن النَّاسِ لَفَاسِقُونَ

Judge between them by what Allah has sent down, and do not follow their low“ desires. Beware of them lest they should beguile you from part of what Allah

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١- Surat al-Qalam ٦٨:٨-٩.

has sent down to you. But if they turn their backs [on you], then know that Allah desires to punish them for some of their sins, and indeed many of the people are transgressors.”(١)

Every kind of compromise and pliability is not to be considered to be moderateness. Moderateness is applicable to circumstances where rational and correct goals are conceived as well as achieved in the sense that man patiently bears some of the problems which some people cause for him in order to attain higher aims, not that man should not react to every person and every kind of behavior out of nonchalance .and compromise with the enemies in the name of tolerance

We must differentiate between moderateness and compromise and understand that, with regard to Islamic goals and religious issues, overlooking transgressions, make concessions, or display flexibility with regard to theoretical and practical principles is quite unacceptable. When divine duty is incumbent upon man, he must discharge it with utmost firmness, be resolute and unwavering in executing it and refrain from .every kind of negligence and carelessness

It is not advisable for man to always show compromise and make concessions with every person and be pliable in enforcing divine goals. A person has to resist, stand firm on his feet and fight to the last breath to carry out divine duties and not show any lenience. When we listen to the whispers of the propaganda machine of the enemy, .we hear them calling us fundamentalists

Of course, their aim in

۱- ۵:۴۹ Surat al-Ma'idah.

using this term is to weaken our nation and present our people as having a harsh and merciless character, but when we pay attention to this label we see that it is a very .proper and dignified name and we should warmly welcome it

Indeed, we are fundamentalists—we always protect our fundamentals, we believe that we must not give up our fundamental ideals and aims, and we must not bargain them for anything. Yes, sometimes it is necessary to make temporary and tactical compromises and yield in regard to issues that are not fateful and ideal, but we must .never make concessions in regard to fundamental ideals and goals

During the difficult days in Mecca when the Noble Prophet (S) was under intense pressure from the Quraysh and he and his followers were being tortured and persecuted by the polytheists to the extent that serious limitations were placed in the way of Islamic propagation and fulfillment of the role of the prophetic mission, every once in a while one of the Prophet's followers was slaughtered for the sake of love for

the Divine as well as due to their goals and ideals and naturally in this turmoil the greatest need of the oppressed and tortured Muslims was liberation from these persecutions and winning the support of people who would harm them against the .Quraysh and hence prepare the means of their redemption

Historians have said that during that sensitive time the people of Ta'if proposed to help as well as support

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the Noble Prophet (S) and stand by the Muslims in wars and conflicts together with protecting the Muslims with their money and lives on the condition that they would not be obliged to perform the daily prayers because they did not perceive it befitting of their status to prostrate on the ground and place their foreheads on clay; in fact, their .culture did not allow them to do this

This proposal was offered to the Noble Prophet (S) at a time when he was in the worst of hardships and difficulties in addition to being under constant pressure of the enemies who had surrounded him on every side. Had the Noble Prophet (S) been like other social leaders, he might have accepted these proposals, taken advantage of the situation, entered into an agreement and derived benefit from his allies while waiting for a suitable moment to gradually make these people acquainted with prayer and other acts of worship and servitude while teaching them cultural activities. Some :interpreters of the Qur'an say that the following verse was revealed in this regard

وَلَوْلاَ أَنْ ثَبَّتْنَاكَ لَقَدْ كِدْتَ تَرْكَنُ إِلَيْهِمْ شَيْئًا قَلِيلاً

And had it not been that We had established you, you would certainly have been near" (to incline to them a little."(١

Allah warns the Muslims against being inclined to the polytheists and making concessions in regard to religion. All the programs, wars and struggles were in the cause of religion and for the sake of making people worship Allah and have connection with

.Surat al-Isra' ۱۷:۷۴ -۱

Him; therefore, how can one make concessions or bargain with them before they become Muslims and worshipers of Allah? The Noble Prophet (S) thus responded to :the proposals of the people of Ta'if

(There is no benefit in a religion devoid of genuflection and prostration."(۱"

They would have loved to see the Noble Prophet (S) compromise with them and give up his ideals in order to win their support and assistance, but never would Allah grant such permission nor the Noble Prophet (S) engage in such bargaining, so he told them that he would not compromise for a religion that is devoid of prostration and he did not need their support. He explained that his religion was dependent on prayer and connection with Allah and the original aim of religion and the prophetic mission was .establishing the sovereignty of Allah and divine worship

The necessity of guarding the fundamentals and basic ideals in all situations has been proven, including such cases as leadership and the management of society. The leader has to be firm in the cause of protecting fundamentals and basic ideals and never compromise. However, he can compromise and make concessions in subsidiary .matters if he deems it expedient to protect the fundamentals

Therefore, social leaders must sometimes show firmness and decisiveness and at other times flexibility and forgiveness. Again, that which must be persistently and firmly safeguarded are the religious fundamentals and the high divine ideals. These cannot be overlooked nor compromised at whatever cost, but in subordinate issues it

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲۱, p. ۱۵۳ -۱

is possible for man to make concessions and bargains and for a leader to overlook .certain things on the basis of expediency

The preceding explanation has been to emphasize caution in not mistaking moderateness for compromise and to distinguish the limits of the two. Of course, it is very difficult to discern the bounds between acceptable moderation and reproachable .compromise

A person has to be very careful to be able to detect in what circumstances to use moderateness and when not to be moderate as well as discern when overlooking something is tantamount to compromise. One of the ways to distinguish compromise from moderateness is to observe whether overlooking or turning a blind eye to something will result in trampling the basic and important religious issues underfoot .or not

If it tramples fundamental religious ideals underfoot, then one ought to know that he is engaging in reproachable compromise. However, when one puts his own personal interests aside and sacrifices in order to acquire greater goals, he has interacted with moderateness with his adversary. Of course, one must be aware that there are .dubious and complicated instances which call for much accuracy

O Abu Dharr! If you desire to be the strongest of men, completely trust in Allah. If you" want to be the most esteemed of men, have piety and if you want to be the wealthiest of men, have more certainty in that which is with Allah than that which is in your ".hands

In this section of the hadith once again

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discussion about piety has arisen and as can be observed, there is no definite relationship between this subject and the previous discussions, although other issues which are in conformity with piety have been mentioned. In the above quotation the Noble Prophet (S) reminds us about three points. The first point is that if you want to have strength and find the capacity to better attain your goals and aims and not experience weakness and easy defeat in pursuing your objectives, you must have complete trust in Allah. The second point is that if you want to be beloved and

:honorable, you must have piety. Allah, the Exalted, states

... إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ...

(Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious among you…”(۱...“

The third point is that if you want to be free from want, you must have more confidence in that which is in the hands of Allah than that which is in your hands. Every person derives benefit from the graces of Allah to some extent and has some kind of capital at his disposal. Sometimes, he has enough money and wealth which make him free from need of other people and he does not have turn to anyone in order to earn money. Or, he has enough food and bread and hence he does not need to borrow .food from other human beings. This in itself is freedom from want

However, we should realize to what extent we can put faith

۱- Surat al-Hujurat ۴۹:۱۳.

in our wealth. Money is likely to be lost or stolen by a thief just as any other blessing is likely to disappear such that man finds no chance to continue to derive benefit from it. It is possible that a person finds he cannot continue to have access to his wealth and use it when he needs it, but that which is in the hands of Allah can never be lost at all .and there is nothing beyond His reach in the universe

Therefore, with regard to the all-encompassing nature of Allah and His power and to the fact that His ownership of all things and existents and whatever He wills is never breached, even if something were on the planet of Mars and Allah wills that it should .reach a person, it will not violate His command

If we attain such awareness that the whole of existence and inner as well as outward powers are under the control of Allah, truly believe that there is nothing outside His authority, and know that His ownership and encompassment is over all things, our belief in Allah will increase and we will have more confidence in that which is in His

hands than that which is in our hands. It is natural that a person who has faith in the power of Allah will be the richest man because Divine will is never breached and there .is nothing outside His power

The Station of Trust in Allah

As has been observed, the Noble Prophet (S) regards trust in Allah

p: ٣١٧

tawakkul] as the essence of power and strength. Taking into consideration the] importance of trust in Allah and its significant role in life especially at times of difficulty as well as wrong interpretations which occur in regard to it, it is necessary to have a .short discussion about this topic

Tawakkul is derived from the word "wikalah" and in the culture of Islam, it means that man ought to take Allah as his sure support and entrust all his affairs to Him. It has been related that the Noble Prophet (S) asked the Archangel Gabriel about the :purport of reliance on Allah. In response, the Archangel Gabriel said

Trust in Allah means that creations do not cause harm or benefit to man nor do they" grant anything to him nor do they prevent him from anything. Also, trust in Allah is losing hope in created things. When a servant attains such knowledge, he does not do anything for other than Allah, does not put his trust in other than Allah, does not fear other than Him, and does not covet other than Him. This is the meaning of trust in (Allah."(١

In the Gracious Qur'an, there are many verses with regard to trust in Allah, amongst :which is this verse

... وَعَلَى اللّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

(And in Allah let all the faithful put their trust."(٢"

In this verse Allah, the Exalted, introduces total trust in Him as essentially inseparable) (.from faith

In the same way that man usually chooses a lawyer for his worldly affairs and

p: ٣١٨

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٧١, p. ١٣٨ -١
.Surat Al 'Imran ٣:١٢٢ -٢

entrusts many of his activities to him in order to reap beneficial results, it is befitting for Allah's servants to rely on Him alone in all worldly affairs and consider Him as their lawyer in order to secure their needs without stress and anxiety. In other words, a person who intends to solve his problems has three ways at his disposal: to rely on his own power, to trust in other people to help him, or to put his hopes in Allah and turn a .blind eye to all other than Him

Meanwhile, total trust and complete reliance on Allah derives from man's knowledge about the Lordship of Allah because if man conceives Allah as the Owner and Possessor of jurisdiction as well as the One in whose hands all existence lies, he no longer sees any need to beg from anyone. In one of his supplications, Imam 'Ali ('a) :says

O my Allah! Thou art the most attached to Thy lovers and the most ready to assist" those who trust in Thee. You know their hidden secrets, are aware of whatever is in their consciences and know the extent of their intelligence. Consequently, their secrets are open to Thee and their hearts are eager to see Thee. If loneliness bores them, Thy remembrance gives them solace. If distresses befall them, they beseech Thy protection, because they know that the reigns of affairs are in Thy hands, and (that their movements depend on Thy commands."(١

In regard to the benefits of complete reliance

p: ٣١٩

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ٧١٩, sermon [khutbah] ٢١٨, trans. Fayd al-Islam -١

:on Allah, Imam al-Baqir ('a) states

A person who trusts in Allah will not be dominated and whoever seeks refuge in Allah" will not be defeated."(1)

At the opening of the tablets of many prophets was engraved the message to believe in Allah and completely rely on Him because one of the signs of belief in Allah is total trust in Him. If man has faith in the Lordship of Allah and believes that the whole of the existing world is under His domination and lordship, and the only worthwhile object of worship is Allah, he will never permit himself to go after any other and seek their help; on the contrary, he will always put his hope in the Divine Essence of Allah and only ask for help from Him.

Trust in Allah and Making Use of Material and Spiritual Means

Trust in Allah is a matter of the heart and not an outward mode of conduct; for this reason, complete reliance does not mean that man has to seclude himself from the people or live as a recluse in the mosque and only busy himself with worship and invocation of Allah or quit work thinking he can earn a living with the hope that Allah will grant sustenance. Without the least doubt, this interpretation is wrong and a person who takes this approach has detoured and not attained the real meaning and purport of trust in Allah. It has been narrated in a hadith:

"The Noble Prophet (S) saw people who never engaged in farming and cultivation. He asked them, 'Who are you.'

1- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٧١, p. ١٥١.

They replied, 'We are those who rely on Allah.' The Noble Prophet responded, 'No, [you are not those people put their trust in Allah] but burdens [and parasites] on other human beings'."(1)

People who do not have the right conception of divine knowledge vainly imagine that trust in Allah means that a person should not derive benefit from material means and facilities and that one who makes use of material conveniences and facilities does not

have complete reliance on Allah. Not every person who derives benefit from material means is devoid of reliance and not every human being who does not make use of material conveniences has trust in Allah. There are lazy and indolent people who wait for bread to be provided to them and they are pleased with just that and they do not have the vigor to work. When it is asked of them why they do not work, they say that they rely on Allah, sustenance is in His hands and only He can provide it! In reality, this so-called justification is an excuse and a cover for laziness and they do not really have reliance on Allah. Of course, some of these people truly have reliance but, in any case, .this interpretation of not deriving benefit on the pretext of trust is incorrect

As we have already said, reliance is a matter of the heart and it denotes dependence on Allah in such a way that man has to derive support from Allah. For this reason, it

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.Mustadrik al-Wasa'il, vol. ١١, p. ٢١٧ -١

is possible for man to attain the highest levels of reliance on Allah and at the same time derive benefit from material means and conveniences in order to fulfill divine duties and responsibilities. It is possible for man to make more effort than other people and be more earnest at work and still rely only on Allah for Allah is disgusted with lazy and indolent people and he has enjoined work on man because divine .wisdom necessitates that the affairs of this world have to traverse a natural course

A person that has knowledge of Allah fundamentally knows that divine wisdom necessitates that affairs ought to take place by means of material mediums. Divine wisdom also necessitates that every phenomenon reaches fulfillment through its own mechanism. Therefore, because we know Allah has perfect wisdom, we can understand that which His wisdom necessitates, which is establishment of the system of causality. In the end, human perfection depends on this very system by means of which human beings are placed in the crucible of tests and trials without which .humanity would not move towards perfection

Man's perfection is dependent upon performance of duties of servitude towards Allah

which is in turn dependent upon the system of human relations which is governed by the system of causality. Therefore, if man seeks the path of ease and secludes himself from other human beings in order to preoccupy himself with worship and he fails to work and make effort, and acts in opposition to divine wisdom,

p: ٣٢٢

reliance on Allah will not make sense.

On this basis, divine wisdom necessitates that man must make use of means to attain his needs and desires. If it were such that only requesting sustenance from Allah were enough for bread to fall from heaven, then no one would ever work for a living and people would never be tried.

However, when it is said that we ought to derive benefit from means in order to attain our needs, it does not signify that our providers of sustenance are the earth and our work. These are from Allah and their management are in His hands, and therefore subsistence too is in His hands. Man has the duty to go after the means in order for divine goals to reach fulfillment in the universe and those goals are for the purpose of man's perfection.

Therefore, the one who relies on Allah has to work and not be negligent like those who do not trust in Allah; of course, the difference between these two lies in their inner states and the conditions of their hearts. The one who relies on Allah is motivated by obedience to the will of Allah and he makes effort while depending on Allah.

However, a person that is not monotheistic and does not rely on Allah seeks his sustenance in his work and efforts and/or from other people. A believer is a person who puts his hope in none other than Allah and perceives all facilities as coming from Him

p: ٣٢٣

and if even he were deprived of all his material things, he does not lose even the

slightest hope in his Lord because he knows that whatever Allah does for his servant is out of wisdom, for the good of His servant and He never deprives his slave of that .which is beneficial and good for him

On the one hand, the cosmic order has been formed on the basis of causality and man has to attain his needs by making effort within that system; on the other hand, work, seeking a livelihood and interaction with others are for the sake of preparing the ground for tests and trials because if man is not tried, he cannot move towards perfection. There has to be employment, the relationship between worker and employer and observance of their mutual rights in order for the ground for man's perfection to be prepared under the auspices of work, effort and respect of mutual .rights

For this reason, man has the duty to work but at the same time he has to believe that his sustenance is provided by Allah and he has to rely on Him. True trust in Allah does not mean that one ought not to work but that his heart has to be with Allah. He has to believe that his sustenance is provided ultimately by Allah not by his work. It is in this case that he becomes successful and overcomes the problems and hardships of life because he has put his

p: ۳۲۴

.hope in the Eternal Divine Essence

It has been narrated that on an occasion when Prophet Moses ('a) became ill, the children of Israel came to visit him and told him that if he were to take a particular herbal medicine, he would feel better. Prophet Moses ('a) responded, "I will not take any medicine until Allah cures me." Some period elapsed and Prophet Moses ('a) did .not get well

Then, inspiration was revealed to him, "I swear upon My honor and glory that I will not cure you unless you take that herbal medicine which the Children of Israel said would cure you." After that Moses used that medicine and became well, but he was worried about what he had told the Children of Israel. Inspiration was once again sent to him,

“O Moses! Did you want to invalidate My wisdom with your reliance on Me? Who besides Me placed that medicinal benefit and effect in the roots of the herbs?”

In addition, it has been narrated that an ascetics left the city to live in the mountains. He decided not to ask for anything from anyone until Allah directly provided sustenance for him. Seven days and nights elapsed and no food came for him. The ascetic was about to die when he supplicated to Allah, “O my Lord! I will die if you do not provide my sustenance!” Allah responded, “I swear upon My honor and glory! I will not grant you livelihood until you return to the people and

p: ٣٢٥

live in society.” The ascetic left the hill and went into the city. When he arrived in the city, some people brought him water while others brought him food and bread. At that moment, Allah said to him, “O ascetic! Did you want to invalidate my wisdom with your asceticism? Do you not know that it is more beloved to me to provide livelihood to my servants by means of other servants than to provide it directly without any intermediaries?”

Sustenance does not only comprise food, but also includes spiritual and material benefits such as knowledge. Therefore, one should not be lazy about acquisition of knowledge and fail to attend classes on the pretext that he relies on Allah to provide him with knowledge. According to a hadith:

“Knowledge is not attained by studying; knowledge is a light which Allah places in the heart of whomever He wishes.”(١)

True, knowledge is provided by Allah and He grants it to whomever He wishes, but we are duty-bound to learn and be earnest in acquiring knowledge and make use of every opportunity in its attainment. It is not true that a person can become a scholar without hard work in the same way that a person cannot earn worldly wealth without making effort and undergoing hardships.

All the blessings which man desires to attain are at the disposal of Allah and the

means are not the original determiners but are tools which Allah has assigned for acquiring blessings and, because Allah wants to grant His sustenance

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱, p. ۲۲۵ -۱

by these very means and facilities, we are duty-bound to derive benefit from them even though it is possible for Allah to grant us unimaginable blessings and favors without our having to make any effort and also when we lack necessary means and .facilities

In contrast, it is also possible for us to fail to attain our desired goals even after much effort and access to all the necessary means and this is indicative of the fact that we ought not to put our hopes in worldly agencies. In essence, people must rely only on .Allah while making use of material facilities and conveniences

As the Noble Prophet (S) states, if one wants to be the strongest person, he must put his hope in Allah. He must make his inner relationship with Him strong so that he may attain inner peace and under the auspices this relationship rely on His eternal power .because He is able to do all things and is the best helper in hardships and problems

Indeed, it is with regard to this trust and firm relationship with Allah that the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali ('a)—that perfect man who used to tremble when praying and supplicating Allah, faint and fall on the ground as a result of fear of Allah—would never bend to the enemy nor fear and the enemies used to flee from him like ants and locusts and they could not stand face to face with him because he ,had the help of Allah

p: ۳۲۷

the Exalted, and His eternal power and he had the Supporter who is never weak and powerless and everything is managed by His will. During the war of Jamal, he gave :the standard to his son Muhammad Hanafiyyah and ordered him

Mountains may move from their position but you should not move from yours. Grit" your teeth. Lend to Allah your head (in fighting for Allah, give yourself completely to Allah). Plant your feet firmly on the ground; have your eye on the remotest foe and close your eyes (to their numerical majority). And keep sure that succor is but from (Allah, the Glorified."(١)

If man does not have trust in Allah, his conscience is always anxious that his life will be filled with distress and agitation because he believes he will not derive benefit. He is heedless of the genuine and sure support and he relies on false and shaky supports. .Therefore, in order to have power, we have to have total trust and reliance on Allah

The Relationship between Piety and Trust in Allah

:In continuation, the Holy Prophet states

O Abu Dharr! If all people observe this verse it would suffice them: 'And whoever" practices piety, He shall make a way out for him from whence he shall not reckon. And whosoever puts his trust in Allah, He shall suffice him. Allah attains His purpose. Allah ".'has set a measure for all things

In this holy verse both piety [taqwa] and trust [tawakkul] in Allah have been) mentioned. This shows that there is a profound relationship between them and they

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۶٢, sermon [khutbah] ١١, trans. Fayd al-Islam -١

cannot be separated. Maybe the reason piety was mentioned first is that attaining piety is the prelude to realization of trust in Allah. Thus, a person cannot reach the (.truth of trust in Allah without first being pious

There is no doubt that all heavenly and earthly affairs lie in the hands of Allah and there is no other power vis-à-vis the power of Allah and it is He who manages the created world with His will and everything happens according to His desire and resolution. For this reason, we must only put our hope in Him and ask only from Him

.and feel free from want from all others

Because Allah has given us orders to respect other human beings and be thankful for their good deeds to us, we have to show due regard to others on the basis of divine duty, but we must refrain from flattery and improper tribute in the vain imagination that a thing will be provided to us by another human being. A person who trusts and believes in Allah conceives sustenance as coming from Allah; for this reason, he does not see the need to compliment other people and bow down to them in the hope that they will help him. Flattery and bowing down are not compatible with man's self-.esteem

Allah, the Exalted, and the divine awliya' of religion ('a) have ordered us to be humble to some people such us our parents and mentors who have great rights upon us and likewise they

p: ٣٢٩

have advised us to be modest and polite to the progeny and descendants of the Noble Prophet (S) because of their closeness to the Noble Prophet (S) and due to our desire to obey Allah and show respect to the Prophet of Allah, not on account of coveting the .world or for material rewards

Allah, the Exalted, mentions humility and respect towards parents after mentioning :worship and servitude to Him

وَقَضَى رَبُّكَ أَلاَّ تَعْبُدُوا إِلاَّ إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلاَهُمَا فَلاَ تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلاَ تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلاً كَرِيمًا * وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَهِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا

Your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship anyone except Him, and [He has" enjoined] kindness to parents, should they reach old age at your side—one of them or both of them—do not say to them, 'Fie!' And do not chide them, but speak to them noble words. Lower the wing of humility to them out of mercy, and say, 'My Lord! (Have mercy on them, just as they reared me when I was [a] small [child]'."(١)

:In regard to the rights of teachers and mentors, Imam al-Sajjad ('a) states

The right of the one who educates you and nourishes your soul is that you must“ respect him, venerate his gatherings, listen to his words with honor, look at him and never speak loudly in his presence. If someone asks him a question, never respond to that question before he himself answers it nor talk

p: ٣٣٠

.Surat al-Isra’ ١٧:٢٣-٢۴ -١

(in his class and never gossip about anyone in his presence.”(١)

If a person humbles himself before someone and compliments another human being on account of coveting worldly and material benefit, the reality of his deeds is polytheism and the truth is that he conceives Allah, the Exalted, as incapable and so covets what other people have.

A person that knows Allah, whose awareness of Him is perfect and pays heed to His word: “Does not Allah suffice His servant?”(٢) does not hope in any other save Him to solve his problems. He only trusts Allah, the Exalted, and at the same time discharges his duties. If his duty is to work, he works and if his duty is to study, he studies and if his duty is to fight in the way of Allah, he fights and puts the rest in Allah’s hands.

Imam Khomeini, may Allah be pleased with him, used to repeatedly say, “We are duty-bound to fight; however, with regard to whether we will win or not, that is up to Him. Whatever He desires and deems expedient will come to pass.”

Lesson ٣٧: Divine Providence and Divine Decree and the Role of True Faith

point

In the previous lessons, the focus of discussion was piety and it was explained that when a person is pious, he should not be worried about his sustenance for the reason that Allah, the Exalted, grants him ways of solving his problems and when he finds himself in difficulties and in a dead end situation, Allah shows him the way of deliverance and grants

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲, p. ۴۲ -۱
.Surat al-Zumar ۳۹:۳۶ -۲

.him livelihood from ways he cannot even imagine

In reality, in the previous sections the Noble Prophet's (S) recommendations to Abu Dharr in regard to the connection between piety and sustenance have been discussed because man desires legitimate, pure and ample subsistence. If he conceives that piety results in the expansion and increase of his livelihood, his motivation to attain .piety increases

Submission to Truth, the Means of Averting Worries

So, to what extent should a believer be worried about his sustenance? To what extent should he think about improving his life and in what ways? In what way should he earn his sustenance? There is no doubt that man has needs which, if not provided, would bring his life to a halt. Sustenance is one of the things upon which the continuation of life depends, so naturally a person who loves life is also worried about .sustenance

As we have previously said, sustenance is not confined to food. The material and spiritual blessings that Allah grants to mankind are all subsistence including but not .limited to a person's clothing, home, spouse, teachers and knowledge

With this broad point of view that subsistence consists of all material and spiritual graces and also the certainty that every person has no option but to acquire .subsistence, it is natural that every person is worried about their livelihood

However, the degree of a person's apprehension is dependent on their various levels of knowledge and certainty; that is to say, in the same way that people's faith and knowledge are not the same, their levels

of apprehension too are not the same and their worry decreases to the same extent that their knowledge increases so much so that some of the saints [awliya'] of Allah reach a level of knowledge where they do not even think about themselves. The station of submission which has been mentioned in the verses of the Qur'an denotes :this station. Allah, the Exalted, states

فَلاَ وَرَبِّكَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىَ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لاَ يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

But no, by Lord! They will not believe until they make you a judge in their disputes,“ then do not find within their hearts any dissent to your verdict and submit in full (submission.”(١)

In the station of submission man reaches a stage where he completely yields to Allah, does not want anything for himself, forgets his desires and only pays attention to what Allah wants. If a person attains this stage, he becomes liberated from anxieties :and everything becomes easy for him

Allah, the Exalted, sent down inspiration to David, 'O David! You desire and will“ something and I too desire and will something and that which I desire takes place. Therefore, you will attain what you desire if you submit to My will and I will cast you (into distress and frustrate your desires if you do not yield to My will'.”(٢)

Some people regard the station of submission to the will of Allah as higher than the station of contentment with His will because they believe that in

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١- Surat al-Nisa' ۴:۶۵.

٢- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٨٢, p. ٣۶.

the station of contentment man consents his will to what Allah does; for this reason, he is concerned with his own desire. However, in the station of submission, one .relinquishes his desires to Allah

They also consider it to be higher than the station of trust in Allah for the reason that

reliance on Allah denotes putting one's hope in Allah in the affairs of life and choosing Allah to be one's trustee. For this reason, in the station of trust in Allah, man is still attached to himself but in the station of submission, he detaches himself from all affairs related to his self and surrenders everything to Allah.(۱)

Inviting the believers to the station of submission, Allah, the Exalted, sates:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِى السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

"O you who have faith! Enter into submission, all together, and do not follow in Satan's steps; he is indeed your manifest enemy."(۲)

The deceased 'Allamah Tabataba'i, may Allah be pleased with him, interprets this verse thus: the words 'salam' and 'islam' and 'taslim' all denote one meaning and the word 'kaffah' just like the word 'jami'an' is used for emphasis and because the verse addresses the believers, and they have been ordered to enter into submission, the order in this verse is addressed to the people of the society altogether as a group and as individual persons.

Therefore, submission is incumbent on every individual of the society and on the community as a whole;

۱- Jami' al-Sa'adat, vol. ۳, pp. ۲۱۱-۲۱۲.

۲- Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۰۸.

that is to say, they ought not to ask questions in regard to the [orders of the] religion of Allah and they have to submit to the commands of Allah and His Noble Prophet (S). In addition, because the verse is especially addressed to the believers, the surrender which the believers have been invited to connotes yielding to Allah and His Noble Prophet (S).

Therefore, submission means surrender to Him after believing in Him. For this reason, it is obligatory for the believers to yield to Allah and not to choose a path which has not

been enjoined by Allah and the Prophet (S) because every nation that has ever been destroyed fell into ruin for forsaking the way of Allah and for following their own carnal desires; a path for which they had no justification from Allah.(1)

Those who have attained the station of submission do not have any personal desires and their will is the will of Allah. They do not worry about how and by what means their sustenance will be provided. They are only pre-occupied with how to be devoted to Allah in order to please Him more. This group definitely attains deliverance and prosperity as Imam al-Sadiq ('a) stated:

"A person who holds fast to the strong divine rope has attained deliverance."(2)

When it was asked of him what 'holding fast to the strong divine rope' meant, he responded:

"It means submission to the will of Allah."

There is no doubt conception of the station of submission is difficult for

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1- Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ٢, p.١٠٣, Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah Publications.
2- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٢, p. ٢٠۴.

us. We are not able to comprehend how man can attain a level of knowledge and awareness to the extent that he forgets himself and only becomes pre-occupied with Allah, the Exalted, but we cannot deny the existence of this station and we know without the least doubt that the special servants of Allah have attained this station of submission and have handed over the management of their affairs to Allah.

A Brief Look at Predetermination and Divine Decree [Qada wa Qadar]

In addition to those who have attained the station of submission to the will of Allah, some have attained a position lower than that. Some of them are those who have attained the position of 'certain knowledge' ['ilm al-yaqin] and they know that all

events of the cosmos—whether small or large—have a well-established order which have been decreed by Allah, the Exalted, and besides this decree, they have also attained knowledge about definite predetermination. That is to say, besides decrees which are controlled by Allah and are changeable, all affairs have also reached a .stage of certain predetermination which is not subject to change

Qada’ (predetermination) means prescription, certainty and decisiveness. ‘Qadar’‘ (divine decree), on the other hand, signifies measuring an amount and determining an extent. Because the occurrence of events in the world is a result of divine knowledge and providence, they demand divine predestination and for the reason that limits and measures and circumstances of time and place have been determined, they have .been pre-ordained by divine decree

It is necessary to mention that sometimes predetermination and divine decree are

not clearly and correctly interpreted and there are certain ambiguities in regard to these two and many people imagine that divine decree and pre-ordination are tantamount to determinism and fatalism. Briefly, we have to say that the issue of determinism or fatalism is not connected to divine decree and providence and belief in divine decree and providence does not mean that man has to quit his duties and .fantasize that all things have been predetermined and that he has no duties

We believe that the principle of causality—the principle of cause and effect—governs the world and all events and phenomena. All phenomena acquire their necessity and existence as well as their form and temporal and spatial attributes and the rest of their qualities from their related causes. One of these causes or agents is the will of man himself and divine decree and providence entail fatalism or determinism only if we deny the interference of man’s will in his deeds and if we believe that divine .decree and providence replace the power, potential and will of man

In reality, divine decree and providence merely mean that the world’s system of cause and effect derive from the divine knowledge and will; of course, man’s free will

or volition is one of the causes or factors of this system. For this reason, belief in .divine decree and providence does not contradict man's responsibility

It was asked of the Noble Prophet (S) if prayers [hirz] which are used to cure illnesses can also prevent

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:divine decree; in response, he said

(These prayers are themselves derived from divine decree."(١"

.(That is to say, their effects in preventing illnesses are divine decree and providence)

Imam 'Ali ('a) was sitting in the shade of a leaning wall full of cracks that was about to fall. After some time, Imam 'Ali ('a) moved from beside that wall and went to sit in the shade of another wall. Some people asked him, "O the Commander of the Faithful! Are '?you running away from divine providence

:He replied

(I am taking refuge in divine decree from predetermination."(٢"

That is to say, I am taking refuge in one kind of divine decree and predetermination from another kind of divine decree and predetermination. If I were to sit under a wall and it falls on my head, I am condemned to a kind of divine decree and predetermination for the reason that in the order of causes and factors if man were to sit under a wall and it fell on his head thus harming him, this is itself a kind of divine decree and predetermination and if he were to move away from a falling wall to save .his life from danger, this is also another kind of divine decree and predetermination

It is worthy of note that causes and factors are not confined to material and ordinary causes and, besides those that we know, there are also spiritual and paranormal causes. One of the causes that greatly affects man's destiny in this world is supplication. In other

۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۵, p. ۸۷.
۲- Tawhid Saduq, p. ۳۶۹, Mu'assisah al-Nashr al-Islami Publications.

words, supplication is one of the ringlets on the chain of divine decree and providence which can be effective in causing events or preventing divine decree and pre-ordination. It is for this reason that it has been said:

"Supplication prevents divine decree even if the decree is very strong."(۱)

Such hadiths take into consideration the whole system as well as the entire collection of causes and factors, both material and spiritual. They take into consideration instances where spiritual causes and factors overshadow material causes and factors. A person who only sees material and tangible causes imagines that causes and factors are confined in these very things and he does not know that it is possible for thousands of other causes and factors to be working under divine decree and predetermination and when those causes and effects come on the scene, they eclipse material causes and factors, hence making them ineffective:

وَإِذْ يُرِيكُمُوهُمْ إِذْ الْتَقَيْتُمْ فِى أَعْيُنِكُمْ قَلِيلاً وَيُقَلِّلُكُمْ فِى أَعْيُنِهِمْ لِيَقْضِىَ اللّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولاً وَإِلَى اللّهِ تُرْجَعُ الأمُورُ

"And when he showed them to you—when you met them [on the battlefield]—as few in your eyes, and He made you appear few in their eyes, in order that Allah may carry through a matter that was bound to be fulfilled, and to Allah all matters are returned."(۲)

As we have said, there are some people who have reached the stage of knowledge and certitude, and they know that the cosmos is governed by Allah on an accurate and calculated system and the occurrence

۱- Safinah al-Bihar, vol. ۱, p. ۴۴۶, section on supplication [maddah du'a], Dar al-Ta'arif li-Matbu'at Publications.

۲- ۸:۴۴ Surat al-Anfal.

and appearance of every event is on the basis of divine decree and predetermination.

They know that all things, including sustenance, are ordained by Allah, that man is never deprived of whatever Allah has decreed, and that whatever has not been written and prescribed will not occur and is unattainable by man. Of course, as we have already said, belief in this accurate and wisely calculated system does not run contrary to belief in duty.

Man can believe in divine decree and predetermination and the unity of divine actions without being affected by fatalism and laziness, sitting at home saying, "Now that everything has been preordained by Allah, there is nothing we can do."

On the contrary, based on divine knowledge, belief in divine decree and predestination and the unity of divine actions and issues of this nature are not incongruous with the need for making effort and discharging personal and social duties in material and spiritual issues. Regardless, if man attains this level of knowledge and certitude, he will no longer have any anxieties.

The Station of Certitude [Yaqin] and Its Levels

point

Now that we have discussed this station of certitude, it is necessary to briefly define that station and its levels:

Certitude [yaqin] is a stable belief conforming to reality which is indestructible and a source of tranquility for man. There is no doubt that certitude is higher than knowledge and ordinary belief and is the noblest and loftiest human virtue which very few human beings have attained and is a great asset, the attainment of which is tantamount to

achieving great prosperity.

A person that has reached the stage of certitude is not attentive to other than Allah, only trusts Allah and does not perceive any source of influence save Him. In reality, certitude is attained after the stages of Islam (submission to the will of Allah), faith, and piety. In this regard Imam al-Rida ('a) states:

"Faith [iman] is one level higher than submission [islam] and piety [taqwa] is one level higher than faith and certitude [yaqin] is one level higher than piety and there is nothing apportioned less among the servants of Allah than certitude."(۱)

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"The Noble Prophet (S) performed his morning prayer with the people in the mosque. Then, his eyes fell on a youth who was dozing and dropping his head drowsily. His color was pale and his body was very thin. His eyes had sunk deep into the eye sockets. The Noble Prophet (S) asked him, 'O youth! How did you spend your night?'

"The youth responded, 'O Prophet of Allah! I spent my night in certainty.' The Noble Prophet (S) became amazed by the youth's response and said, 'There is a reality and truth for every certainty. What is the truth of your certainty?' The youth replied, 'O Prophet of Allah! The truth of my certainty has made me sorrowful, it keeps me awake (for worship) at nighttime and obliges me to fast during the day. I have become disinclined to the things of this life. It seems as though I am seeing

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۱- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۸۷.

the Throne of Allah and all human beings have been raised and gathered for judgment and I too am among them. It seems as if I am seeing the dwellers of paradise enjoying the pleasures therein, entertaining one another while leaning on soft cushions. It seems as though the people of hell are being tortured therein and they are weeping and requesting help. I feel as though right now I can hear their frightful voices echoing in my ears.'

At this juncture the Noble Prophet (S) addressed his companions, 'This is a servant" who has enlightened his heart with the light of faith.' Then, he addressed that youth, 'Be firm on this state and never lose it.' Then, the youth requested him, 'O Prophet of Allah! Ask Allah to grant me martyrdom.' The Noble Prophet prayed for him and it did not take long before he participated in a war with the Noble Prophet (S) he was (martyred after nine people, he being the tenth martyr."(١)

Certitude has three levels: ١) certain knowledge ['ilm al-yaqin], ٢) certain vision/eye of certitude ['ayn al-yaqin], ٣) certain truth [haqq al-yaqin]. All the three levels have been :hinted at in the Qur'an

كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ * لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ * ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ

No indeed! Were you to know with certain knowledge, you would surely see hell." (Again, you will surely see it with the eye of certitude."(٢)

إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ الْيَقِينِ

(Indeed this is certain truth."(٣"

[Certain knowledge ['ilm al-yaqin .١

It denotes steadfast belief and certitude which corresponds with

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ٣, p. ٨٩ -١

.Surat al-Takathur ١٠٢:٥-٧ -٢

.Surat al-Waqi'ah ٥٦:٩٥ -٣

reality which is attained by inferring something from its effect, like certitude about the :existence of fire after seeing smoke.(١) In the Qur'an, Allah states

سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ وَفِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ أَوْ لَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ

Soon we shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in their own souls until it"

becomes clear to them that He is the Real. Is it not enough that your Lord is witness to all things?"(٢)

In this verse the existence of Allah has been inferred from signs in the horizons.

٢. Certain vision ['ayn al-yaqin]

It consists of beliefs which are attained by seeing and witnessing which conforms to intuition and insightful perception. This seeing is stronger in clarity and brightness than outward [physical] eyes.(٣)

Referring to this level of certitude, it has been recorded in Shaykh Saduq's "Tawhid" that:

"One of the scholars of the People of the Book [ahl al-kitab](۴) came to Amir al-Mu'minin ('a)(۵) and said, 'O Amir al-Mu'minin! Have you seen your Lord at the time of worship?' Imam 'Ali ('a) responded, 'Woe unto you! I do not worship a Lord whom I have not seen.' The questioner said, 'How have you seen your Lord?' Imam 'Ali ('a) responded, 'Woe unto you! Physical eyes do not see Him, but the intuitive and insightful eyes as well as hearts possessing real and steadfast faith'."(۶)

٣. Certain truth [haqq al-yaqin]

It denotes decisive belief which is attained by way of obtaining the thing itself and accomplishing real connection with it in such a way that the

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١- Jami' al-Sa'adat, vol. ١, p. ١٢٣.

٢- Surat Fussilat ۴١:۵٣.

٣- Jami' al-Sa'adat, vol. ١, p. ١٢۴.

۴- Either a Christian or a Jew.

۵- Imam 'Ali ('a).

۶- Tawhid Saduq, p. ١٠٩, Mu'assisah al-Nashr al-Islami Publications.

possessor of certitude witnesses by means of his intuitive and inner eyes the bounties

possessor of certitude witnesses by means of his intuitive and inner eyes the bounties of light from Him. The result of this level of certainty is annihilation in Allah [fana' fi Allah] and ecstatic absorption in love and affection for Him, so much so that he does not see any independence for himself—it is like getting into fire and burning within it.(1)

It has been related in a hadith qudsi(2):

"Man does not get near to Me by means of that which is more beloved than what I have made incumbent upon Him and he gets near to Me by means of optional prayers until I love him. When I love him, I become his ears with which he hears and his eyes with which he sees and his tongue with which he speaks and his hands with which he touches."(3)

In the Supplication of Abu Hamzah al-Thumali, Imam al-Sajjad ('a) says:

"O my Lord! I ask from You inner and insightful faith, to keep me [on the course of] of steadfast and firm faith so that I may attain true certitude which I cannot attain unless you have written and recorded it for me, and make me content and happy with what you have granted me, O Most Merciful of the Merciful."

Imam al-Sajjad ('a) requests real, steadfast and firm faith which has reached the level of certitude and in reality he is asking for the utmost limit of faith because after that, he says, "true certitude' [yaqin-i sadiq]. The certitude which the Imam

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1- Jami' al-Sa'adat, vol. ۱, p. ۱۲۴.

2- 'Hadith Qudsi' is a hadith that has been revealed by Allah to the Prophet apart from the Qur'an. Hadith qudsi (sacred hadith) are so named because, unlike the majority of hadiths which are Prophetic hadiths, their authority [sanad] is traced back not to the Prophet (S) but to the Almighty. [ed.]

3- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۵۴.

is asking for from Allah is the most important divine grace and blessing under the

auspices of true certitude and truth of certitude. Inner belief is attained by man when he conceives no power except the power of the Lord governing the cosmos and he perceives all matters as dependent on the Divine Essence of Allah, he always sees himself as being in the presence of Allah, he is cautious not to commit unbecoming .deeds and not act contrary to His pleasure

In the hadiths, certitude has been mentioned as one of the greatest divine graces and blessings for man and, as has been previously mentioned, Imam al-Rida ('a) has said, "... there is nothing apportioned less among the servants of Allah than certainty." That .is to say, there are very few people who have attained the level of certitude

:Imam 'Ali ('a) says

No servant has tasted faith until he knows that which has befallen him could not have" passed him by and that which has passed him by could not have befallen him and that (the only granter of loss and benefit is Allah, the Honored and Glorified."(١

If a person were to attain this degree of certitude and superior understanding that every problem and every blessing that befalls him could not by any means have bypassed him, and whatever did not happen for him, could not possibly have happened, he feels special peace and tranquility in his inner being and tastes the .sweetness of faith

A person who attains this measure

.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ٣, p. ٩٧ -١

of faith, although he seeks material and spiritual pleasures, knows that everything is measured and will come to him at a specific time and it is not true that everything he desires will come to him and whatever he does not like will be avoided. A lot of things which man does not like are decreed for him on the basis of divine expediency and conversely divine expediency often necessitates that what we desire does not come

.to us and we cannot attain it no matter how much we strive for it

The Saints [Awliya'] of Allah and Contentment with Allah's Decree

When a person attains certitude, he relinquishes his own desires and sets his eyes on the wishes of Allah and from then on does not spend time on thinking about unattainable aspirations and cravings and makes effort only to perform duties and responsibilities. He preoccupies himself with discerning what Allah wants of him and is pleased with whatever has been decreed. In addition to knowing that which has been decreed will come to pass, the people of certitude [ahl al-yaqin] know that their good .lies in divine decrees; that is to say, they are aware of the best of all possible systems

They know that what Allah has decreed is the best and what has been preordained by divine decree is a part of this best system and that with regard to its special causes, conditions and requisites nothing better than that special phenomenon can occur. Yes, in addition to having conviction that whatever Allah desires will come to

them, people who have attained this degree of knowledge are also happy and have no worries. If affliction befalls them, they are happy and welcome it with joy because they know that their good lies in that which has occurred—this is the station of .[contentment [with what Allah decrees and desires

The station of contentment [maqam-i rida'] is attained by people who believe that all divine decrees are advantageous to man. In this regard, many hadiths have been :related. Imam al-Sadiq ('a) stated

I am surprised at the Muslim for whom Allah, the Honored and Glorified, does not" determine a decree save that there is good for him in it; if his body is cut to pieces with a scissors, it is good for him, and if he is made the owner of the whole world from the East to the West, it is good for him."(۱)

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) says that all decrees which Allah preordains for a believer are good for him, whether they are apparently good or bad. An unpleasant event that occurs

for him is for his good either in this world or in the hereafter. A person who attains such knowledge is pleased with what comes to pass and he is not worried for the reason that he has not behaved with negligence in regard to his position of servitude and he has discharged his duties. He is not perturbed about whether his sustenance will be increased or decreased or about what will befall him. He entrusts his

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.Ibid., p. ۱۰۲ -۱

work to Allah while pursuing his servitude and obedience and he knows from the bottom of his heart that whatever occurs is good and he desires nothing but that.

Such a person perceives all events and occurrences with optimism and he is content with afflictions and problems. He has no grievances when thrown into prison, and according to the expression of the hadiths, he is content even if they were to cut his body to pieces with a scissors for the reason that he conceives his good in that. During the days of the Revolution and the Imposed War, we saw parents, brothers, sisters and wives whose beloved ones were either burnt or badly cut before attaining martyrdom but nevertheless welcomed the event with joy and thanked Allah for allotting them the favor of a martyr!

Contentment with divine decrees and being pleased with what occurs is easy to talk about, but its materialization is very hard. It is very hard to conceive how certain special servants of Allah attain the position of not agonizing over what comes to pass for them, it is not a matter of concern to them what tomorrow brings; they are not worried whether or not they will have sustenance for the morrow.

If their beloved one goes to the battlefront, they are not worried whether he will be killed or not and if he himself is spending his days at the battlefront with those devoted to the way of truth, he is not worried about his

household and family because a person that has a hold on his life and is ready for martyrdom cannot be worried about anything. How good it is when these devoted people safely return home and preserve that special spirit and characteristic and teach others lessons about sacrifice, contentment with divine will and submission to Allah.

The deceased Mulla Mahdi Naraqi states: "Contentment with the divine will is the highest religious position and the noblest station for those nearest to Allah. A person who enters this door will enter paradise. The importance of the station of contentment reaches such a high degree that it has been related in a hadith that the Noble Prophet (S) said that on the Day of Resurrection, Allah will grant wings to a group from among my followers with which they will fly from their graves towards paradise and they will derive benefit from the pleasures of paradise according to their wishes.

The angels will ask them, 'Have you been stopped for accounting?' They will say, 'There is no accounting for us.' The angels will ask again, 'Have you passed over the bridge over hell?' They will respond, 'We did not see the bridge over hell.' The angels will further ask, 'Have you seen hell?' they will answer, 'We did not see any hell.' The angels will ask them, 'Whose followers are you?' They will answer, 'We are followers of Muhammad (S).'

"The angels will ask them what they did in the world. They will respond, 'We had

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two attributes for which Allah granted us this position:

One is that we were ashamed to sin in solitude and the second is that we were contented with what Allah allotted to us'.(۱)"(۲)

In regard to a person who has attained the position of contentment [maqam-i rida'], Allah, the Exalted, states:

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّهُ * إِرْجِعِى إِلَى رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَهً مَرْضِيَّهً * فَادْخُلِى فِى عِبَادِى * وَادْخُلِى جَنَّتِى

O soul at peace! Return to your Lord, pleased, pleasing! Then enter among my" servants! And enter my paradise!"(3)

This blessed verse explains that the station of contentment and certainty cause anxiety, worry and distress to depart. One of the qualities of this station is that man is both pleased with and pleasing to Allah:

رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him. This is the mighty" achievement."(4)

In regard to the above verse, 'Allamah Tabataba'i says, "If Allah has described the soul at peace as 'pleased [with Him]' [radiyah] and 'pleasing [to Him]' [mardiyyah], it is because being at peace and ease with the Lord demands that man has to be pleased with Allah and not complain for the least decree and preordainment that befalls him, whether that decree and preordainment is existential or recorded in His divine law [shar'].

For this reason, no annoying event annoys him and no sin swerves his heart and Allah is definitely pleased with a person once he becomes pleased with his Lord because nothing annoys Allah more than the

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1- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ١٠٣, p. ٢٥

2- Jami' al-Sa'adat, vol. ٣, p. ٢٠٢.

3- Surat al-Fajr ٨٩:٢٧-٣٠.

4- Surat al-Ma'idah ٥:١١٩.

exit of His servant from the fold of servitude and he will deserve the pleasure of Allah once he traverses the course of servitude. That is why Allah has used the terms 'well pleased' [radiyah] and 'well pleasing' [mardiyyah]."

Therefore, certitude and peace of mind is attained once a person is well pleased with

Allah. Being well pleased with another means that one accepts the qualities and deeds of the other, and a monotheistic person does not become unhappy when he conceives that all the affairs of the world are under divine control and when he attains the position of contentment because he sees events as having been ordained by Allah .and he perceives their connection with the divine Essence

He knows that no event occurs without the permission of Allah and divine will and providence; in addition to not becoming upset, he becomes pleased because every .event occurs on the basis of divine will and providence

In reality, contentment [rida'] is higher than the station of patience [sabr] because patience is also congruent with unhappiness: man patiently bears an event but that event is bitter for him; however, a person that has attained the position of contentment does not even perceive hardships and problems so as to bear them patiently. On the contrary, all things are good for him, he is pleased with whatever .befalls him and not worried about anything

Earnestly imagining this position is difficult for us—even harder is attaining it! How difficult it is for man to be pleased

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when he is in good health and how much more when he is ill?! Is it possible to be completely satisfied with our possessions when we are wealthy and how can we be pleased with deprivation if we become poor?! Above and beyond this, those who have attained the position of contentment create rapport between the spiritual and psychological state of contentment and deeds that are apparently not compatible .with contentment

Without the least doubt, the Infallible Imams ('a) and Imam al-Husayn ('a) in particular had attained the loftiest degrees of contentment and we observe that on account of their being pleased with Allah, they took the sword and fought to the last breath of their lives because they were displeased with the government of Bani Umayyah. One might ask how it is possible for a person to be pleased and at the same

.time displeased with an event that is decreed by Allah

Making a distinction between these two is very hard and man has to attain high levels of perfection in order to separate these levels and aspects one from the other. In explanation, a person should look at matters from different perspectives. On one level he should view these events in regard to their proximate agents becoming displeased with their conduct. A person should be displeased with his sins, oppression, transgressions and treachery and on another level his soul must be happy and .pleased

We will cite an example in order to make this point easier to understand: imagine

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that a person has a headache and a doctor prescribes bitter medicine for him. That man will take and drink the medicine because he wants to be in good health. He is pleased with taking the medicine but he is unhappy with its bitterness. If man has a cancer on his hand or leg, he will be pleased with cutting it off his body because if this is not done the cancer will spread to the other parts of his body, but at the same time he is displeased on account of losing a limb of his body and with the pain of the .operation

This very two sided quality and aspect in man is very surprising because in regard to one event, he is able to have two feelings; of course, these two feelings are the result of two different causes: when he conceives that his health will be preserved by taking medicine or cutting off his limb, he becomes happy and he also becomes unhappy on .account of either the bitterness of the medicine or the pain which he has to bear

With regard to the previous example, we say that a person whose knowledge has reached perfection knows that events in the world do not take place without the will of Allah. Therefore, he is upset on account of actions that are carried out by an oppressor which are signs of his lowliness, decadence and existential deficiency. He is upset about why man ought to be so ignorant

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and sinful that he commits such indecent acts. Therefore, it is possible for man to have two points of view in regard to one event and react accordingly to the two .perspectives

Believers though have to be pleased with events and occurrences because they know that they take place on the basis of divine will and providence, they know that Allah does not do unwise deeds and He calls for good order in which events occur in their .proper place under proper conditions

When a person knows that Allah, the Wise, does not perform vain and futile deeds, he conceives that whatever happens in this world is part of an orderly and perfect system and for this reason it brings about the perfection of existents of the world and human beings become nearer to Allah under the auspices of various events and attain perfections which are incomparable to worldly pleasures; for this reason, he is optimistic in regard to the whole set of events. From this point of view, he is not even saddened by the martyrdom of the prophets (‘a) and Imams (‘a) because he knows that they attain higher perfection with their martyrdoms and in addition their .martyrdoms are a cause of progress for the religion

The Doyen of Maetyrs, Imam al-Husayn (‘a) attained the loftiest position with his martyrdom. His martyrdom gave fruit to the survival and progress of Islam and also became a means for other human beings to attain spiritual perfection under the auspices of knowing and

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remembering him and distinguishing the proper course of life for prosperity in this world and the hereafter. If he had not become a martyr, neither would he have .attained that high station nor would Islam have become prevalent

We would neither have become believers in the Imams nor would we earn their intercession. It is for this reason that we have to be pleased with his martyrdom and

believe that it was a divine decree and a component of the best of all possible systems. However, becoming sorrowful results from the emotional aspect of man's soul because man is an emotional creature and his emotions necessitate that once a .sad thing befalls his beloved one, he too becomes sad

Weak-minded people cannot separate these aspects one from the other and place them side by side and sometimes their rational and emotional aspects collide with one another and for this reason they cannot strike a balance between them, but those whose souls have become perfect separate these aspects from one another and the separation of these aspects brings about different states in their souls, even with regard to one event that occurs at a specified time. Of course, this is dependent on different levels of the soul such that on one level they become happy and on another .level they become sad

Indeed, people who have attained the station of contentment bear pleasures and .displeasures because they perceive them as divine decrees

A Look at Patience [Sabr] and Its Significance

The stations of contentment, knowledge and certitude are great graces and it

is a magnificent blessing for man to be well pleased with all the decrees of Allah on account of knowing that Allah desires only what is good for him; however, not every .person attains these stations and this understanding is not easily achieved

Much self-edification and effort is required to arrive at these positions. If a person does not attain such high positions, he has to generally know that divine decrees are good and even if bearing hardships and afflictions is difficult for him, he still has to try .to be patient and adorn himself with the gem of patience

A believer who has not arrived at the station of contentment, but is patient in the face of hardships, discharges his duties and does not neglect his obligations even if he does not like those bitter events to take place. If it is time to go to war with the enemy,

he goes to war because it is his religious duty even though he is not pleased with the bitter events. He bears the hardships of war although he is not content in the deepest recesses of his heart. Therefore, for a person who has not attained the position of .contentment, the station of patience [maqam-i sabr] is desirable

Patience is one of the ethical concepts that has been greatly emphasized in Islamic ethics. What is understood from this term is a spiritual state that occurs for particular people during hardships. Different conditions arise for people when faced with .unpleasant events

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Some immediately become anxious and grievous when confronted by problems and this sorrowful state affects their lives and becomes a hindrance in their activities—.these are impatient and fragile people

In contrast, some people are forbearing in the face of hardships and safeguard their peace of mind. Bitter events do not affect their spirits very much—these are patient people. Though these people are not pleased in their hearts with bitter and unpleasant events, they still bear them with patience and equanimity. They do not welcome unpleasant events, their hearts do not desire to go to the battlefront and be martyred. They do not want to walk over landmines, but they go to the battlefront and would never turn their backs on the enemy when duty calls because they patiently .bear dangers

Parents do not want their child to go to war, but when divine duty calls for that, they do not hinder their child and bear patiently the separation of their child knowing that man is built by bearing hardships and such an act is better for them and their child to .secure the prosperity of the hereafter

Sometimes, patience is wrongly interpreted and it is imagined that forbearance in the face of hardships denotes accepting humility and being indifferent in the face of negative events and oppression that is perpetrated against other human beings. This interpretation is incorrect and alien to the true meaning of patience. Patience in

Islamic terminology denotes enduring hardships and resistance in the face of things which draw

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man towards deviations or towards things that do not bring about our perfection. .That factor is sometimes internal and at other times external

Sometimes, that factor incites man to move on a null and void course, and sometimes it makes him remain stagnant in a futile spot. For example, when hungry, man is inclined to eat, but perhaps food that is given to him is either illegitimate or doubtful. It is here when our instincts incite us to eat the illicit food whereas resistance in the face .of that instinct is a sign of patience

On the battlefield, the enemy is firing from every side and the heart says run away from the war and save your life, but Allah says resist until Islam becomes triumphant. It is here that resistance in the face of the call to flee from the battlefront is termed .patience

Sometimes, an external factor invites a person to something that is not right and that external factor sometimes occurs through other human beings and at other times by means other than human beings which result in divine decree. For example, an earthquake might occur and the roof of the house becomes destroyed. If we safeguard our peace of mind in the face of this event and discharge our duties, we .have displayed patience

The importance of patience becomes clear when we observe the role it plays in life and in human perfection. We conceive that man's perfection is attained by means of ,his volitional actions; that is to say

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when a person is faced with two opposing attractions and he chooses that which invites him towards perfection, his essence and perfection becomes manifest when .he chooses that which is pleasing to Allah

Therefore, perfection is accomplished on the scene where two opposing attractions come face to face. It is on these arenas that man has to put in all-out effort and choose that which is pleasing to Allah. If in this case the motivation of faith and innate disposition is so strong as to invite him to truth, he will have attained his worthy perfection. If, however, the satanic incentive and motivation of the carnal soul is stronger, the person makes errors in the war between these two attractions and goes .in a direction that leads to his fall—and this is the reality of being tested

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِی بِیَدِهِ الْمُلْکُ وَهُوَ عَلَی کُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیرٌ * الَّذِی خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَیَاهَ لِیَبْلُوَکُمْ أَیُّکُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِیزُ الْغَفُورُ

Blessed is He in whose hands is all sovereignty, and He has power over all things. He," who created death and life that He may test you [to see] which of you is best in (conduct. And He is the All-mighty, the All-forgiving."(١

Indeed, on the course towards our perfection, we are faced with factors which invite us in different directions: rational, spiritual and divine factors invite us in one direction and agents of the carnal soul as well as animal and satanic influences tempt us in another direction. The correct choice is resistance

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.Surat al-Mulk ٦٧:١-٢ -١

in the face of agents which incite us towards vanity and futility. Therefore, if our life is .to move in the direction of perfection, we must conjoin it with patience

It has been narrated in a hadith that the Noble Prophet (S) said that the Archangel :Gabriel was asked what patience meant. The Archangel responded

Patience means that you have to be uncomplainingly forbearing and resistant in" distress in the same way that you persist in happiness. You have to be perseverant in destitution in the same way that you are composed in affluence, and you have to have endurance in illness in the same way that you are calm in health; therefore, a patient person should not complain about his state to human beings on account of what has

(befallen him."(١)

It is befitting of those that have not attained the station of certitude, who can clearly discern that which has befallen them is good and welcome hardships with happiness, to be patient and ask Allah to provide their needs and be forbearing in deplorable circumstances that come to pass. As we have already said, a person that has attained the station of contentment does not become upset in hardships but he is instead happy and thankful to Allah. If his son is martyred, he says "Praise be to Allah, I wish I had another son to send to the battlefield so that he too would be martyred." Not only does he not become sad, but he becomes proud and delighted and

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٧٧, p. ٢٠ -١

thanks Allah for what has happened, but there are many people who have not attained this position, as Allah, the Exalted, says:

... وَقَلِيلٌ مِنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّكُورُ

(And few of my servants are grateful."(١)..."

If those who have not attained the position of contentment uncomplainingly endure deplorable events and thank Allah for whatever comes to pass, Allah grants them the reward of the patient, the firm and the steadfast. They have to be forbearing, not grumble and safeguard their peace of mind hoping that Allah will grant them a reward.

Although hardships are bitter for them, they have to bear that bitterness patiently in the same way that a person who takes bitter medicine does not derive pleasure from it, but knows that he will get better by taking it. It is hard for a person that is forced to lose a limb of his body in an operation to bear it, but because he has no option he submits to fate and becomes ready to have that limb cut so that he may save his life.

The Effects of Preferring the Will of Allah over One's Own Will

With regard to what has been said, some of the verses of the Qur’an and the hadiths, with the intention to train and edify people who have desires in their hearts but have not attained the station of contentment and submission to the will of Allah, give the glad tidings that Allah will grant worldly needs and desires if one chooses piety :[taqwa], and in this regard the Noble Prophet says

O Abu Dharr! Allah, the Blessed“

.Surat Saba’ ۳۴:۱۳ -۱

and Exalted, states, ‘I swear upon My glory and honor that no servant of Mine prefers My will over his save that I make him free from want and I make his thoughts and ”...’efforts devoted to the hereafter

Allah swears in order to emphasize this issue because the purport of His words is not easy to comprehend for the majority of people. Therefore, He swears in order to make people believe this matter. Allah states that if His servant’s will conflicts with His will and the servant prefers Allah’s will over his own—if man’s will is the same as Allah’s will, both his desires and the desire of Allah are attained, but the discussion concerns circumstances where man’s will is incompatible with Allah’s will—Allah guarantees a number of things for his servant: the first thing is that He makes him feel free in his heart from want of other human beings. Of course, mankind is always in need of Allah and there is also a feeling of need for Him in man’s heart and this feeling must be in man’s heart. Utmost honor and pride for man lies in his conceiving that he .is in extreme need of Allah and not perceiving himself as free from need of Allah

Taking into consideration the fact that man’s needs are usually outwardly brought to hand by means of other human beings, he perceives himself to be in need of other human beings. This feeling of needing other people demeans people to the extent

that they feel in need of others and humble themselves to them—sometimes they .feel they have to flatter them for favors and at other times plead to them

If a person's relationship with Allah is strong and he prefers Allah's will and contentment over his own, Allah awakens the spirit of freedom from need of other human beings in him and provides enough means for him to help him attain his needs; of course, those means are intended to make him attain higher aims and goals and one has the duty to make use of those means and be grateful to Allah while deriving benefit from them and if other human beings were among the mediums and means of attaining one's worldly aims and goals, he has to be thankful to them, too. Although a person derives benefit from various means, he only conceives himself as being in .need of Allah and he does see himself in need of any other than Him

The feeling of affluence and freedom from need of other human beings is a great blessing which grants personality to man. Of course, we should not imagine from what has been mentioned that a person should not be modest and humble towards other human beings. A person has to be humble both towards Allah as well as to other people. Some who have little acquaintance with Islamic knowledge imagine that Allah does not want us to have a feeling of abjectness and humility even before Allah Himself! These

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.people have not understood Islam and they have vain imaginations about it

The root of Islam is servitude and the peak of man's pride lies in lowliness and humility before Allah and placing one's forehead on the earth and prostrating to Him. Man's utmost perfection lies in perceiving himself as low in the presence of the divine Essence and because Allah desires perfection and ascendancy for man, He has asked him to feel humble in His presence and present his needs to Him because man's .perfection is guaranteed in devotion to Allah

Conversely, man ought not to feel small and low in the face of other human beings nor perceive himself as being in need of them because when he conceives himself in need

of them, whether he likes it or not he will feel belittled to the same extent that he feels .in need of them

Man conceives himself as low to the same measure that his affairs lie in the hands of other people. Although he does not admit it in words, he still feels belittled and demeaned in his heart. However, if a believer entrusts his affairs to Allah as a result of his faith and conceives himself only in need of Him, he does not feel any need for other people in his heart though it is possible for Allah to alleviate his needs by means of another one of His servants and want the helped man to be thankful to that other benevolent servant while still perceiving

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.himself as being in need of Allah

It has been narrated in regard to Prophet Abraham ('a) that when Nimrod ordered that a great fire be set and Prophet Abraham ('a) be thrown into the fire that the fire was so intensely hot that no one had the courage to come near it and they were forced to cast the Prophet into the fire from afar by means of a catapult. The :Archangel Gabriel appeared while Abraham was in the fire and asked him

"?Are you in need of any help"

,Abraham responded

(Yes, but not from you."(۱"

Abraham said that he needed help and assistance but not from other than Allah and Allah is also aware of my state of affairs and knows my needs and He will do whatever He deems best in my interests. After victory in this trial, Abraham was appointed to .the rank of intimate and sincere friendship with Allah, the Exalted

Of course, attaining the position of freedom from want of others is not an easy task and man only arrives at such a station with the grace and blessings of Allah, but Allah has placed the requisites for attaining this position at the disposal of man and one of

those requirements is that man prefers the will of Allah in affairs concerning his will and the will of Allah and on the first level he must feel in his heart freedom from want .of other human beings

The second point is that he no longer feels worried in regard to

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱۲, p. ۳۵ -۱

his worldly affairs, entrusts the good and expediencies of his worldly affairs to Allah, only concerns himself with the hereafter and devotes himself to securing heaven. He is only preoccupied with what his destination will be and with whether he has .discharged his divine duties or not. Hence, he is always worried about the last world

I make the sky and the earth guarantors of his sustenance and I safeguard his“ ”.career and I do trade for him

The third point is that He secures the needs of a person who prefers Allah's will over .his own will and I make the sky and earth guarantors of his subsistence

The fourth point is that I make him derive profit from his career and compensate for his losses and deficits. Every person chooses a career in his life and earns an income under its auspices and it is natural there is no guarantee for the continuation of a career and profits from it. Where is the guarantee that an orchard will continue producing fruit? Where is the guarantee that cows and herds of sheep will remain alive? Where is the guarantee that a person will not be dismissed from his job? Where is the guarantee that a trader will not make losses? Allah is the Guarantor of profit for .a person who prefers the will of Allah over his own will

The fifth point is that in business and trade He helps him so as not to make losses. People who are always preoccupied with

the world try to deal with people who will give them more profit. They choose dealings and businesses from which they will gain more profit. They are always worried about the possibility of making losses or gaining less. Allah states that He supports and helps a person who prefers His will to man's personal desires in every business and dealing. Instead of him thinking and managing and planning with whom and how to do trade so as to make enormous profit, Allah supports him and safeguards his interests.

Thereafter, in reference to the fact that a believer has to have so much certainty that under its auspices he must to be worried about his sustenance and he has to be certain that Allah, the Exalted, will grant him what has been decreed for him, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"O Abu Dharr! If the son of Adam were to run away from his sustenance in the same way that he runs away from death, his subsistence will reach him in the same way that death will find him."

Man does not like death and he takes flight from it but, in the end, death overtakes him and he finally dies. Likewise, if he runs away from his sustenance, it will reach him and there is no fleeing from what has been decreed for him. If man strives with all his might, it is not clear that his sustenance will be increased. All too often people strive a lot and still die of hunger!

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There are a lot of stories in this regard, and some have narrated that some very rich people were confronted with incidents where they had to eat their shoes during the last moments of their lives in the vain effort to save themselves from extreme hunger and death. On the other hand, there were people who did not work so hard but attained the great wealth that was decreed for them by Allah.

Man must not be remiss in discharging his obligations and in striving to earn a living, and neither should he be lazy on the pretext of belief in divine providence because Allah hates the indolent. However, if a person has the option to choose between various careers, the low income of a particular field should not hinder him and he

must believe that the sustenance which Allah has decreed for him will reach him and this must encourage him to seek knowledge with peace of mind because he is sure that subsistence will not be deprived of what has been decreed for him no matter .what path he follows

Lesson ۳۸: Knowing Allah and His Wise Order

Man and His Relationship with Allah

This section of the Noble Prophet's (S) advice is about man's relationship with Allah and attentiveness to Him during hardships and also asking for help from Him while having freedom from need of other human beings. In regard to the first issue, it must be mentioned that man has been created to attain proximity to Allah; therefore, all his activities have to be done with the purpose of

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safeguarding this relationship and if one uses his energies to preoccupy himself with .other activities those energies will be wasted

All inner and outward faculties, as well as all blessings, should be employed on the course of this relationship. Without doubt, this course is very expansive and has various forms every one of which is related to one of the aspects of the soul because Allah, the Exalted, has endowed our souls with many aspects, appearances and ranks and all these aspects have been disposed towards a different orientation—but all have to be focused on Allah. It is not plausible for one of our existential aspects to be .oriented towards Allah and for other aspects to be directed elsewhere

Divisions have been made for the existential aspects of man; for instance, it is said that one aspect of man's existence is for his relationship with Allah, another aspect is for his relationship with himself, another is for his relationship with other human .beings and another aspect is for his relationship with other creatures

From the viewpoint of the properties of man's being and the divine laws that that have been enacted for man, this division can be true: that which is discussed in regard

to the aspect of the relationship of man with himself, for example, are the things that are beneficial and harmful for his body—such and such a thing is prohibited while such and such a thing is permissible. Some of the divine laws such as prayer and fasting

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determine man's relationship with Allah. Some of the divine laws determine man's relationship with other human beings, such as how to behave towards parents, .relatives, friends and enemies

These divisions are acceptable, but it has to be borne in mind that these divisions of the aspects of man do not mean that we have another goal besides traversing the course of Allah and moving in the direction of proximity to Him; on the contrary, we have to admit that all our existential aspects—despite wonderful and amazing differences in them—have all been directed at one point; that is to say, that very relationship which man has with other human beings and with other creatures has to .be for Allah

The form of our deeds differs: one form is prayer and another form is teaching or learning and performing daily duties, but all these are only beneficial to us when they are ultimately done for Allah. That is why all of man's deeds and even his thoughts .have to be for Allah and he has to desire, seek and search for no other except Allah

In addition to the attractions which man has to secure his material needs for this limited life, every person also has attractions towards an unlimited life, a limitless ultimate goal as well as infinite beauty, perfection and power. In reality, man's existential makeup has been built for an ultimate goal and his instincts have been designed to move in the direction towards the infinite world and that which is confined

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by the world has an introductory aspect and acts as an engine that propels man to .continually move towards Allah

We should bear in mind that that which makes a person truly human is his relationship

with Allah for the reason that man's ultimate perfection lies in this connection with his Lord because this relationship is attained under the auspices of knowledge and sound deeds; in other than this case, man is in the category of other animals, perhaps even :worse than animals

... أُوْلَئِكَ كَالأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ ...

"They are like cattle, rather they are more astray."(١)

Meanwhile, the existence of prophets ('a) and the saints [awliya'] of Allah ('a) and the academic works, precedents, customs and power which they manifested are signs of their relationship with Allah. Of course, it is worth mentioning that from a rational analysis, the existence of every creature is a kind of relationship with the Creator and it is not possible for the created not to be related to its creator, but this relationship is .existential and it manifests itself in the whole order of existence

There is no running away from such a connection and every creature has an existential relationship with Allah. However, besides this existential relationship, man has another distinction. He can perceive this relationship under the auspices of the intellect, conception and awareness and his worth lies in his comprehending this .relationship better and deeper

Usually this knowledge and relationship with Allah is attained by way of acquired knowledge which comes to

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١- Surat al-A'raf ٧:١٧٩.

hand under the auspices of employing the intellect and rational as well as philosophical deduction; however, this cognition is nevertheless not the end of the way for human perfection and it does not take man to the ultimate destination nor .does it raise strong belief and faith in him

Complete understanding is direct knowledge which means that a person reaches a

stage where he not only comprehends the connection with Allah with his entire being but also becomes one with that relationship. The goal of religion is to make man attain :such a position. It has been narrated that Imam ‘Ali (‘a) said

”.I never saw a thing save that I witnessed Allah before it, after it and with it“

If this knowledge is not attained in a complete form in this world for a person who is striving to attain perfection, he has to prepare the ground to attain this in a complete manner in the other world. It is for this reason that in the language of religion and in the traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), the relationship with Allah has been interpreted as vision and it has been said that the highest blessing for the people of paradise is that they witness the divine brilliance according to the measure of their personal perfection. It is always feasible for those who have attained the highest stations of perfection to witness these lights and these divine manifestations are lesser for .people who are at lower levels of perfection

It has been

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narrated that there once was a religious scholar who was on the verge of death. One of his relatives saw him in a dream and asked him, “In that world, do you visit the Pure Imams (‘a) and especially Imam al-Husayn (‘a)?” The scholar responded, “What are you saying? In this world there is a distance of thirty years between us and the Doyen of Martyrs (‘a). For this reason, one has to wait for thirty years in order to be ”.(permitted to visit Imam al-Husayn (‘a

Truly, we have to realize where our hearts lie because the degree of a person’s worth is equal to what he entrusts his heart to—one whose heart is attached to his orchard and house is worthy to that same measure, but if he entrusts his heart to Allah and becomes attached to Him, his worth becomes infinite and he no longer becomes confined to the transitive limitations of the world and he becomes detached from all .things and all people except Allah

Therefore, man's real value is dependent on his relationship with Allah and gaining proximity to Him, not to material pleasures and possessions. Man's humanity lies in his conception and inner attention to Allah. We should observe where our hearts are attached because to whatever extent our connection with Allah is deeper and our relationship with Him is stronger, when we pass away from this perishable world the divine lights will manifest more strongly and we will derive more benefit from the graces and

:blessings of Allah. The Noble Prophet (S) has said

O Abu Dharr! Should I not teach you words by means of which Allah will grant you" benefit?" I said, "Yes, O Prophet of Allah!" He said, "Safeguard your relationship with ".Allah so that He may preserve His relationship with you

All the advice that has been mentioned up to now was beneficial, but the reason the Noble Prophet (S) draws Abu Dharr's attention to this point by saying that he will tell him something by means of which Allah will grant him benefit is indicative of the fact these words are a summation of the previous sayings and have special importance. The Noble Prophet (S) draws Abu Dharr's attention to the fact that Allah has existentially created a relationship between Himself and His servant. He has initiated a link of relationship between the great position of Divinity and His servant as insignificant human being; therefore, we must safeguard this connection and never .let it come to an end. If we safeguard this relationship, Allah too will protect us

What prosperity and grace is greater than that an insignificant human being should be in connection and relationship with the Lord of the worlds? For this reason, man must endeavor to preserve this association and other graces will always come to him under the auspices of this relationship. If he does not endeavor to protect it and fails to discharge the duties of servitude, he ought not to expect to receive the graces and blessings

.of Allah, the Exalted

Perhaps there are ambiguities for some people in regard to how there can be a relationship worthy of safeguarding between Allah and me [a human being]; what relationship can exist between me—a lowly person who lives on this earth—and Allah, the Exalted, and the divine Throne? In order to remove this ambiguity, the Noble :Prophet (S) says

".Safeguard this relationship so as to perceive Him in your presence"

That is to say there is no distance between you and Allah and He is always in your :presence and never separated from you

... وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

"(And He is with you wherever you may be. And Allah sees what you do."(١)

Therefore, if a human being wants to be eligible to receive the blessings of Allah, the Exalted, so as to be protected from afflictions, whisperings of the devil as well as temptations of the soul [safeguarding in the words of the Noble Prophet (S) includes protecting man from every danger, whether material or spiritual], he has to guard his .relationship with Allah and never let it become weak

Attentiveness to Allah in Difficulty and Ease

:Thereafter, the Noble Prophet (S) states

"Acquaint yourself with Allah when you are in a state of affluence so that He may ".know you when you are in a state of poverty

Because Allah has infinite power and everything that takes place in the world is a result of His will and nothing is outside of the realm of His will, man must pay attention to Allah in every

.Surat al-Hadid ۵۷:۴ -۱

state. When a person is in hardships and difficulties, he should only look to Allah for help and ask Him to alleviate his problems and conversely when he is in a situation of prosperity, he should pay heed to Allah because He has put the blessing of affluence and ease at his disposal.

It is natural that man pays attention to Allah when he finds himself entangled in hardships and unpleasant events; in regard to the polytheists, Allah states:

فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلْكِ دَعَوُا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ

"When they board the ships, they invoke Allah putting exclusive faith in Him, but when He delivers them to land, behold, they ascribe partners [to Him]."(۱)

It is really no big deal when a person seeks out Allah in times of hardships when waves of calamities besiege him from every side [even the most committed atheists call out to Allah when they feel death near]. Of course, there are some people who have been so driven away from the proximity of Allah that they do not pursue Him even when overwhelmed by hardships, but a person in whose heart there is even a bit of faith at least seeks out Allah in times of hardships and tribulations.

The Noble Prophet (S) states that if you want Allah to respond to your calls when you call upon Him, you must safeguard your relationship with Him in times of affluence and be acquainted with Him because if you become remote

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.Surat al-'Ankabut ۲۹:۶۵-۶۶ -۱

from him during your days of ease, you should not expect His response to your calls during your days of tribulation. Remember Allah during your days of ease and affluence in order for Him to remember you when you are in hardships.

All of us, to a greater or lesser extent, have been afflicted in our lives by hardships as

well as tribulations from which we have been liberated after some time, but we easily forgot the blessing of liberation and the ease which followed after those hardships despite the fact that afflictions and tribulations are meant to awaken us and bring about attentiveness to Allah and understanding of the value of the blessings that we .possess

If we are confronted by dangerous circumstances and all the doors are shut before us except the danger that is threatening us and all of a sudden help comes our way and we are delivered, we ought to learn a lesson from the experience. Do we assume the occurrence was accidental? No, nothing is accidental in life—all events are blessings .of Allah and His grace and blessings save us from danger

In the system of creation whatever takes place is a result of the divine will and nothing occurs without having been willed by Allah. If blessings are granted to man or affliction is repelled from him, all these things take place as a result of the will of Allah. He makes the means and conditions available, whether those conditions are common or uncommon and whether

p: ۳۷۷

we realize them or not. It is Allah who is continually granting us sustenance, whether by common means such as work and trade, or unnatural means such as manna (a special food delivered) from heaven. Alleviation of man’s problems is also performed .by Allah, whether by natural or unnatural means

In one method of division people can be categorized in three groups in regard to their :attention to Allah

The first group is those who pay attention to Allah whether in hardships and tribulations or in affluence and ease. In the expression of the Qur’an, they remember :Allah morning and evening—at all times, not only in times of hardships

وَاذْكُر رَّبَّکَ فِی نَفْسِکَ تَضَرُّعاً وَخِیفَةً وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِن الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالآصَالِ وَلاَ تَكُنْ مِن الْغَافِلِينَ

And remember your Lord within your heart beseechingly and reverentially, without“

(being loud morning and evening, and do not be among the heedless."(1)

فِی بُیُوتٍ أَذِنَ اللَّهُ أَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَیُذْکَرَ فِیهَا اسْمُهُ یُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِیهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالآصَالِ

(In houses Allah has allowed to be raised and wherein His name is celebrated."(2)"

The secret behind the fact that this group remembers Allah all the time is that they are not heedless of Him despite all the blessings He has granted and that they perceive themselves as being in need of Allah at least for the continuance of their blessings. Also, because they understand their need towards Allah, as per their various levels, blessings and afflictions make no difference for them. These are worthy servants who constantly remember Allah and they are

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1- Surat al-A'raf ۷:۲۰۵.
2- Surat al-Nur ۲۴:۳۶.

reciprocally objects of Allah's attention.

The second group of people includes the majority of believers. These are people who, to a greater or lesser extent, become afflicted by negligence when they are in a state of welfare but awaken and show their need for Allah when problems and tribulations overcome them. This group also comprises relatively good servants, but Allah complains in regard to them as to why they are negligent when they are granted blessings and return when they are deprived of His graces.

وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَی الإِنسَانِ أَعْرَضَ وَنَأی بِجَانِبِهِ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَذُو دُعَاءٍ عَرِیضٍ

"When We bless man, he is disregardful and turns aside; but when an ill befalls him, he makes protracted supplications."(1)

The third group of people is the group which does not seek Allah in any circumstance or state. Some people belonging to this group believe that afflictions are in fact sent by Allah. They perceive afflictions as either arising from unnatural causes or that they

are a sign of the anger and wrath of Allah such as the people of Yunus (Jonah) who repented when divine retribution was decreed for them. They turned to Allah and repented because they knew that divine retribution was a sign of Allah's wrath.

Allah too delivered them from affliction on account of their repentance and belief. This group of people does not turn to Allah when afflicted by problems which they do not perceive as coming from Allah. Allah has thus reproached this group of people:

فَلَوْلا إِذْ جاءهُمْ بَأْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُوا

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۱- Surat Fussilat ۴۱:۵۱.

وَلَكِنْ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُم الشَّيْطَانُ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

"Why did they not humble themselves when Our punishment overtook them! But their hearts had hardened, and Satan had made to seem decorous to them what they had been doing."(۱)

Elsewhere, Allah has stated:

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُم مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِىَ كَالْحِجارهِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَهً وَإِنَّ مِن الْحِجارهِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَّقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاء وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَهِ اللّهِ وَمَا اللّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

"When your hearts hardened after that; so they were like stones, or even harder, for indeed there are some stones from which streams gush forth, and indeed there are some of them that split, and water issues from them, and indeed there are some of them that fall for fear of Allah. And Allah is not oblivious of what you do."(۲)

The Need to Seek Assistance from Allah

Thereafter, with regard to the fact that man must ask only from Allah and never turn to other than Him, the Holy Prophet (S) says:

"If you want to make a request from Allah, make it and whenever you want to seek

help from someone, ask for Allah's help because the pen has already written what will ".".occur until the Day of Resurrection

It is normal for man to have needs and not have the ability to solve all of them. In addition, he cannot secure all of his needs and whether he likes it or not, he must ask for help from others. The Noble Prophet (S) tells Abu Dharr that when it

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۱- ۶:۴۳ Surat al-An'am.

۲- ۲:۷۴ Surat al-Baqarah.

is necessary for you to ask for help from someone, instead ask from Allah. When you notice that you have needs which you are unable to meet and you are obliged to ask for help, ask for help from Allah because there is no one who is more aware about your needs than Him and there is no one more capable of solving your problems than .Him

The reason for this is because the whole of creation belongs to Him and His power encompasses everything and if He desires a thing to happen, He only wills and decrees it and it occurs. In addition to all this, Allah, the Exalted, loves His creatures more than anyone else and desires only what is good for them and it is for this reason .that He has ordered His slaves to request only from Him

It is natural that once Allah opens the door of supplication and invocation for human beings, He is ready to respond and accept those supplications and in addition, He always includes man in the fold of His blessings. There is no doubt that one of His blessings is deliverance of man from afflictions and repulsion of hardships. When a person is entangled in problems, Allah delivers him from those hardships and sometimes Allah repels calamities even before they befall a person. Human beings are always indebted to the graces and love of Allah and must know that only Allah is able to help them and that nothing occurs in

the cosmos except with His permission; therefore, it is only from Him that help should .be sought

:Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states

When any one of you desires to receive all that you ask of your Lord, he has to lose" hope in the people and only put his hopes in that which is in the possession of Allah. When Allah, the Honored and Glorified, sees this in his heart, He grants him whatever (he asks."(١

Every Muslim says, "And to you alone do we turn for help" at least ten times a day in daily prayers, but we do not behave this in deed and perhaps many of our actions are indicative that we do not seek help only from Allah but instead seek help from other .human beings

Of course, there are some people who are honest in regard to seeking help only from Allah and they are truthful when they say, "You alone do we worship and to you alone do we turn for help" and they are really sincere in their worship and devotion to Him and only seek help from Him; however, most of us are not sincere in our devotion to Allah and ask for help from other human beings. In hardships we expect our parents, brothers, sisters and friends to help us and sometimes we even publicly declare our .hope and trust in them

The Noble Prophet (S) advises us to only ask from Allah and only seek His help and after that he draws Abu Dharr's attention

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ٣, p. ٢١٩ -١

to divine decree and providence. As has been previously explained, one of the benefits of belief in divine decree and providence is that when ease, wealth or any good comes man's way, he does not become overjoyed and conversely if hardships and unpleasant events befall him, he does not become unusually upset because he

knows that whatever takes place is in accordance with divine decree and there is no :escaping from it not to mention that all occurrences are in man’s best interests

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِی الأَرْضِ وَلاَ فِی أَنفُسِکُمْ إِلاَّ فِی کِتَابٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَأَهَا إِنَّ ذَلِکَ عَلَی اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ * لِکَيْلاَ تَأْسَوْا عَلَی مَا فَاتَکُمْ وَلاَ تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاکُمْ ...

No affliction visits the earth or yourselves but it is in a Book before we bring it about“ —that is indeed easy for Allah—so that you may not grieve for what escapes you, nor (exult for what comes your way.”(۱)

One of the benefits of belief in divine decree is that man always places his hope in Allah because he knows that everything is preordained by Him and He can change His decrees and other human beings are not capable of significant influence; hence, there is no benefit in putting faith in them. If an unpleasant event takes place and hardships befall a person, he knows that Allah, the Exalted, has decreed that event out of wisdom or, if something is taken from him, he knows that it has been written in the guarded tablet and on the

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۱- Surat al-Hadid ۵۷:۲۲-۲۳.

.basis of Allah’s wise management, such events have to take place

Therefore, a person does not become devastated and beseech Allah to ask Him to repel those hardships and problems. If a blessing has been allotted to us, we ought not to become overjoyed and proud and forget Allah counting it as our own accomplishment; on the contrary, we should become more aware of Allah, thank Him for freely granting us blessings and guard our state of humility in His presence. We must not be like Korah [Qarun] and conceive blessings as the fruit of our own efforts :and endeavors

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَی عِلْمٍ عِنْدِی أَوَ لَمْ يَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَهْلَکَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِن الْقُرُونِ مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَأَکْثَرُ جَمْعًا...

He said, ‘I have indeed been given [all] this because of the knowledge that I have.’“

Did he not know that Allah had already destroyed before him some generations more powerful than him and greater in amassing [wealth]…"(۱)

Everyone must know that what he has been allotted is on the basis of divine decree and that Allah has also provided all means in the world; therefore, if it is necessary to ask for someone's help, one must ask for help from Him in whose hands lie all affairs, everything happens by His decree and He can change His decrees if He deems it expedient. A supplicant must open his hands in entreaty before Allah and trust only in Him.

When calamity and affliction come to pass, a believer

۱- Surat al-Qasas ۲۸:۷۸.

must not become upset because affliction occurs on the basis of a wise and calculated course of events. For this reason, a person ought not to grieve and moan. Allah will not be dissuaded from His perfect system of management of affairs by our moaning and grieving.

If a blessing has been granted, one must not imagine that it has been attained on account of cleverness. Divine decree and the wise management of Allah brought about that grace and it is also a test to try the people as to how they use that blessing. Therefore, one of the benefits of belief in divine decree and providence is that man understands that whatever comes to pass is a result of wise management and if he sees some deficiencies and inadequacies, he ought not to be very sad for the reason that he knows that the One who has set this system up and manages this decree is more aware of His deeds than him and He knows what is good and expedient for His servants. Taking what has been mentioned into consideration, after advising Abu Dharr to ask for help from Allah, the Noble Prophet (S) brings his attention to divine decrees:

"Because the pen has already written what will occur until the Day of Resurrection."

Previously we mentioned, and now we emphasize, that we must not take advantage of the issue of divine decree, predetermination and divine knowledge. We must not imagine that what has been decreed to occur will come to

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pass and we cannot do anything about it, and therefore pull ourselves aside and shirk .our responsibilities and duties

We have to know that our movement and effort too is one of the divine decrees; for this reason, we ought to make more effort at discharging our duties and not imagine that we can shirk our responsibilities by depending on divine decree. This is one of the .devil's temptations

Belief in divine decree and providence ought to make a person pay even more attention to Allah and only seek Him and no one else. One must never evade his duties in order to attain goals nor be deceived by the devil imagining that everything has .been preordained, and therefore there is nothing that can be done

One cannot say, "Let's go and sit in seclusion in a corner." Or, if they are students, quit studying. One cannot say that he will become a scholar whether he studies or not. The truth is that, if it was decreed for one to become a scholar, he will become one, but by studying. Of course, it is not possible for knowledge to be granted to man without himself striving and making effort, which is itself Allah's grace and sometimes it is .allotted to man, but in any case man has to make effort and strive

:In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) emphasizes his previous words thus

If all human beings strive to benefit you with something which Allah has not written" down (decreed) for you, they will

p: ۳۸۶

not have the ability to do so and in the same way if all the people strive to harm you with something which has not been preordained for you, they will not have the ability

".to do so

If the will of Allah, the Exalted, makes the occurrence of something incumbent, all the conceivable powers of the universe cannot prevent it:

... وَاللّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَى أَمْرِهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ

"And Allah has full command of His affairs, but most people do not know."(۱)

In another verse, He sates:

وَإِنْ يَمْسَسْکَ اللّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلاَ کَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلاَّ هُوَ وَإِنْ يَمْسَسْکَ بِخَيْرٍ فَهُوَ عَلَى کُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدُيرٌ

"Should Allah visit you with some distress, there is nothing to remove it except Him, and should He bring you some good, then He has power over all things."(۲)

Therefore, the final decision and irrefutable will is Allah's, so if a person wants something they must ask Him who has such will and power and never go after people who are in need of someone else's help like oneself and are unable to do anything. We must understand that no one can help us unless it is Allah's will that they do so.

Results of Knowledge and Certitude in Regard to the Wise Management of Allah

The last point the Noble Prophet (S) advises Abu Dharr about is that if he were to possess the level of certitude it would be very beneficial for him. One must have certitude that what Allah has decreed will come to pass and what has not been decreed will not occur as well as having certitude

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۱- Surat Yusuf ۱۲:۲۱.

۲- Surat al-An'am ۶:۱۷.

that things that have been decreed are not futile and occur as the result of wise management.

With this knowledge and awareness, a believer is sure whatever takes place is for his

good because Allah does not desire what is harmful for his servant, especially the slave who has entrusted his affairs to Allah. He strives with peace of mind to perform his duties and he knows that what takes place is in agreement with divine wisdom and is beneficial and expedient for him, whether it is apparently pleasing or not. He knows that whatever happens on the basis of divine decree is beneficial and there is nothing .detrimental in divine decrees

Naturally, if man were to attain this kind of certitude and spiritual knowledge and conceive all events and occurrences of the universe as beneficial and in conformity with the wise management of Allah, he will be pleased with what happens and sure that what has taken place is for his own good and man is happy with good and it is not .possible for him to be displeased

Of course, this certitude, awareness and lofty faith is not easily attained. Not every person can establish such faith in their hearts nor has every person the ability to attain this station. A person who wants to obtain such a position has to strive on the course of edification of character and embellishment of his inner self and attain a level .where he is in complete control of his soul

He must

p: ۳۸۸

achieve lofty stations and positions by doing what Allah has enjoined and taking lessons from the precepts of the saints [awliya'] of Allah and by always preferring the will and contentment of Allah over his own desire and contentment. It is obvious that earning this standard is not possible for every person and the Noble Prophet (S) advises that if a person cannot manage to gain such spiritual knowledge and certitude where he perceives that all that happens to be good and beneficial to him and not become despairing when confronted by adversities, at least he ought to be patient .and persevering when faced with bitter and unpleasant events

He has to know that there is no benefit in being impatient with that which is destined to take place and no matter how impatient he is, whatever Allah desires will come to

.pass and there is nothing that can be done to prevent it

If adversity such as illness, poverty, earthquakes, floods or any other events befall man and ravage his life and he bears them with patience and endurance, he becomes the object of Allah’s blessings. Of course, if an event is foreseeable and can be prevented by strategic thinking, man has the duty to avert it, but all too often even the most advanced countries, with modern equipment at their disposal, are often .confronted by unforeseen calamities and events that they lack the power to forestall

As is well known, Japan is the most earthquake prone country in the

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world and the Japanese have built the strongest earthquake resistant buildings and acquired much equipment for relief for those hit by earthquakes because they have a lot of experience in this field. In spite of all this, we see that the most deplorable earthquakes in the world have hit Japan and have inflicted more damage on that country than the damage inflicted by earthquakes which have hit some backward .countries

Therefore, events are preordained and they happen while people are unaware of them and are controlled by the manager of this cosmos and it is He who knows when, how and where any event is going to take place; He knows where an earthquake or flood should occur. It is possible, God forbid, for a calamity to befall ourselves too, but if we have certitude and faith in the wise management of Allah, we will not become upset because we think well of divine decrees and conceive everything as beneficial .and expedient

When we see some weaknesses and deficiencies in an affair, we become angry but if we perceive things as always beneficial in some way, there is no way we can become saddened by them. It is possible for a person to be bothered by some pain or illness, but once he conceives that the pain or illness is good for him in some way, he welcomes it overall. For example, a person whose tooth has become decayed and he must remove it willingly welcomes the operation and pays money

for it because he perceives this to be good for him and he does not become saddened because he understands it to be good generally because the removal of his tooth will .improve his overall health

Sometimes, a person has an illness that forces him to go abroad for treatment and as a result spends large sums of money or is forced to have a part of his body amputated in an operation and must even give his consent to such; however, this does not mean that he is pleased with those things or that he has no qualms about them. It is likely that he is in fact quite displeased and even complains about them to Allah, as many people of weak faith do who lose patience whenever a calamity befalls them. It is in :regard to this issue that the Noble Prophet (S) states

Therefore, if you manage to perform a duty for Allah with contentment and certitude,“ do it and if you do not manage to do what you dislike with contentment and certitude, there is much good in patience and forbearance. Success is accompanied by patience and deliverance is accompanied by sorrow and sadness and verily there is ease after ”.every hardship

You are truly blessed if you manage to attain the greatest human station, contentment, because the best station and human attribute is that man should be pleased with divine decrees and happy from the deepest recesses of his heart and never have complaints. Of course, contentment is

attained under the auspices of certitude and these two [contentment and certitude] have a very close relationship with one another because one who has not attained .certitude cannot become content with divine decrees

Therefore, strive to conduct yourself on the basis of contentment and certitude, in which case bitter and sweet events will become equal for you and you will have neither sorrow nor complaint. However, if you do not attain this position and you do

not manage to find any justification to feel pleased when unease and unpleasant occurrences come to pass, try to be patient, do not grumble or complain, and .safeguard your peace of mind

If you cannot manage to be pleased in regard to those unpleasant events in the recesses of your heart, understand that you have not managed to attain the position of contentment due to insufficient knowledge so do not be impatient because impatience has no benefit and improve your intellect and faith. Know that if you .persevere when faced with hardships, Allah will grant you much good

The Role of Hardships in the Process of Man's Perfection and Spiritual Ascendance

In order to emphasize his saying, the Noble Prophet (S) states that success is guaranteed by patience and forbearance, every sorrow and problem is accompanied by deliverance and every hardship goes along with ease. In the Qur'an too Allah, the :Exalted, states

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا * إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

(Indeed ease accompanies hardship. Indeed ease accompanies hardship."(۱"

In the Gracious Qur'an very few issues have been repeated twice, what is more with the word 'indeed' [inna]. This

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.Surat al-Sharh (or Inshirah) ۹۴:۵-۶ -۱

is indicative of the regard and grace of Allah in regard to the issue. In the above-quoted verse Allah states that every hardship is accompanied by ease, not that after every hardship comes ease; it seems as if ease has been concealed in the very core .of hardships

In Surat al-Sharh (or al-Inshirah) Allah consoles the Noble Prophet (S), who it seems had been upset, with a kind tone and makes him feel at ease by reminding him about

how Allah removed the heavy burden of hardships from his shoulders and changed the hardships into ease. Thereafter, he states that every hardship and pain is accompanied by ease. For this reason, if you find ease embark upon endeavor once more and restart your striving. In reality, Allah hints at this point that hardships and problems are a prerequisite for all of man's perfection and progress and grant him :vigor and therefore afflictions and problems are necessary for perfection

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الإِنسَانَ فِی کَبَدٍ

(Certainly, We created man in distress."(۱"

This verse is indicative of the important role of hardships and ordeals in building man and in his perfection and if this were not true, Allah who is the fountainhead of mercy and kindness and desires prosperity and good for His servants would not have .created man in toil and difficulty

In addition to what has been said, Allah always appraises His servants in order for the worthy to be distinguished and known and in this regard He has made two programs for training and

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۱- Surat al-Balad ۹۰:۴.

edifying human beings: one is the legislation of acts of worship and the other is the institution of existential afflictions and problems. Ultimately, those who appropriately follow divine injunctions and endure hardships are guided to mercy and divine :knowledge

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّکُمْ بِشَیْءٍ مِن الْخَوفْ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِن الأَمَوَالِ وَالأنفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِینَ * الَّذِینَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُم مُصِیبَهٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَیْهِ رَاجِعونَ

We will surely test you with a measure of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth, lives," and fruits; and give good news to the patient—those who, when an affliction visits (them, say, 'Indeed we belong to Allah, and to Him indeed we return'."(۱

:Imam al-Baqir (‘a) states

Allah shows kindness to His servant and bestows him with afflictions in the same way“ (that a man returning from a journey brings presents for his family.”(٢

The Noble Prophet (S) was invited to the house of one of the Muslims, when he entered his house, he saw a chicken that had laid an egg on top of a wall and that egg was bound to a nail and was not falling, the Noble Prophet (S) was surprised by this. The owner of the house said, “Are you surprised? I swear upon the Allah who appointed you to the Prophetic mission that no affliction has ever befallen me.” When the Noble Prophet (S) heard this sentence, he got up and left the house without partaking of any food and said, “A person that has never faced hardships is not the object of Allah’s

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.Surat al-Baqarah ٢:١٥٥-١٥۶ -١
.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ٣, p. ٣٥۴ -٢

”.grace

For this reason, if we correctly look at affliction, we realize that hardships and trials play an instructive and awakening role. Adversity awakens as well as puts on guard sleeping and immobile people and motivates them to be self-determined and strong-willed and in truth hardships make man resistant and unsusceptible. The quality of the life of this world is that it is accompanied by hardships and in this regard the more man’s resistance increases, the more is his perfection and bit by bit his intelligence and natural capabilities blossom more and this is indicative of divine grace and .blessings

... سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا

(Allah will bring about ease after hardship.”(١...“

This verse is addressed to people of insufficient capabilities who lose hope when they

are faced with problems and imagine that the world has come to an end. They forget to supplicate and seek the help of Allah and His saints [awliya'] and they perceive all .doors as closed unto them

A believer must not lose himself when faced with problems, and must safeguard his peace of mind and know that after every hardship is ease. Allah, the Exalted, has not decreed that His servant will be faced with hardships all the time. On the contrary, .Allah has made ease and comfort accompany hardships

Lesson ۳۹: The Criteria of Value In the Words of Allah, the Exalted

point

As has been observed, the central point of the previous discussions was piety. In those discussions the importance of piety as well as its effects in the life of man and also its benefits

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۱- ۶۵:۷ Surat al-Talaq.

in the hereafter were mentioned and because it is possible for some to develop wrong conceptions about piety and not distinguish real piety from outward or pretensive piety, in this discussion the criteria for evaluating deeds and behavior will be .discussed

A lot of people are used to judging people on the basis of their outward appearance. If a person prays and recites invocations and the Glorious Qur'an often especially if he performs his obligatory prayers on time and observes issues of ritual purification, he is considered to be pious. This conception is superficial and incorrect and in order for the criteria of the value and superiority of man to be known, scholars of ethics have put forward a theoretical and fundamental discussion in regard to the criteria of the goodness and badness of deeds and the value of man that will be dealt with in this .section

The value of man from the viewpoint of the Qur'an lies in faith and righteous deeds and perhaps there are very few pages in the Qur'an where these two issues have not :been mentioned

وَأَمَّا مَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُ جَزَاءً الْحُسْنَى وَسَنَقُولُ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِنَا يُسْرًا

But as for him who has faith and acts righteously, he shall have the best reward, and" (we will speak to him gently of our command."(۱

:Elsewhere, it states

إِلاَّ مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَأُوْلَئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّهَ وَلاَ يُظْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا

except those who repent, believe, and act righteously. Such will enter paradise, and..." they will not be wronged in

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۱- ۱۸:۸۸ Surat al-Kahf.

(the least."(۱

Human beings have two reciprocal stations: one station is related to the pious and possessors of virtue; that is to say the prophets, the righteous [salihan], the saints [awliya'], the sincere [siddiqin] and the martyrs, and it is because of this station that the Prophet Adam ('a) became the object of prostration for the angels and that man :attains a position where he is described thus

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِی جَنَّاتٍ وَنَهَرٍ * فِی مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ مَلِیکٍ مُقْتَدِرٍ

Surely the pious shall be in gardens and rivers, in the abode of truthfulness with an" (Omnipotent King."(۲

The reciprocal station is the position of downfall, degradation and remoteness from Allah. When an individual refrains from servitude and worshiping Allah and

discharging personal and social duties and, in short, once he abstains from fulfilling his human role and traverses the course of decadence, he reaches a position lower than :animals

... لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لاَ يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لاَ يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لاَ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُوْلَئِكَ كَالأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ ...

They have hearts with which they do not understand, and they have eyes with which" they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear; They are like cattle; (rather, they are more astray."(٣

Therefore, the value of man lies in paying heed to the divine and spiritual aspects of his self which spring from the heart and incline to the other members of the body. The tongue has a share in remembrance of Allah, the eyes have a

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١- ١٩:۶٠ Surat Maryam.

٢- ۵۴:۵۴-۵۵ Surat al-Qamar.

٣- ٧:١٧٩ Surat al-A'raf.

share in reciting the verses of the Glorious Qur'an, the ears have a share in listening to the truth and the hands as well as legs have a share in moving along the path of .Allah

Accordingly, if we notice that in the Glorious Qur'an many recommendations have been made about remembrance of Allah, it is because human life does not have value without remembrance of Allah and it is only by this means that a person can attain the .status of nearness to Allah

Islam and all the divine religions believe in these two infinite opposing positive and negative values. This is something that is not conceivable by means of ordinary human standards and can only be understood and justified according to divine criteria. In addition, Islam believes not only in these criteria for man's lifetime but also for every moment of one's life; that is to say, Islam says that within one hour man can

make the value of his life reach its peak. Within one hour man can make himself prosperous forever and attain eternal and infinite bliss or can make himself villainous and wretched within that same hour.

Therefore, the criterion of value in Islam, is the competence and worthiness of an individual and his righteous intention and from the viewpoint of Islam even the benefits that a person grants to society are not a standard of measure even if the value that the society has placed on that person is equal to the benefits that the

person has imparted to the society. All too often, it is possible that the value which a society grants to an individual is not only refuted by Islam, but Islam may also grant that person negative value due to the fact that the individual is corrupt inside and has a reprehensible and contaminated interior covered by a deceptive outward appearance.

For this reason, it is possible for an individual to confer many benefits upon the society, but to be ill-fated himself, like a scholar that teaches religious sciences and from whom others derive benefit and attain prosperity but he himself suffers misfortune because he does not practice what he preaches and ends up in the hellfire. Or a rich man who spends his wealth for the society and alleviates the needs of the deprived with the intention of attaining fame, power and position.

Without the least doubt, from the viewpoint of Islam his deeds have no value whatsoever. That which grants value to man's existence and deeds is his relationship with eternity and the infinite world. This relationship is a relationship that comes from the heart and is attained under the auspices of a righteous intention and attentiveness of the heart to Allah.

Therefore, if deeds are performed for the sake of Allah, they have infinite value whether they are visibly small or large. In addition, it is natural that the more man's knowledge about Allah increases and the purer his intention becomes, the greater his own value becomes.

Reciprocally, the more

the purity of his intention decreases and the more his intention is to draw the attention of people and popularity as well as gain social position, the more the value of his deeds decreases even if his deeds are innumerable. We draw the conclusion that that which grants value to man is in reality attentiveness to Allah. If a person remembers Allah, his deeds have been performed for Him but in other than this case, it is not possible for him to do anything for Allah and as a result his acts are not .valuable

Worthwhile Deeds from the Viewpoint of Islam

A lot of people imagine that the more value a deed has for the society, the more its spiritual value and the more effective it is for spiritual ascendance and perfection of man. They imagine that a deed that has benefit for human beings has also been done for Allah or has been performed in Allah's way and for this reason they pay more .attention to the 'bigness' of a deed

They say that such and such a person has spent so much from his wealth to build a hospital or mosque. This conception is very superficial. It is true that one of the criteria of a good deed is for it to be beneficial for people, but it is not true that every good deed that is beneficial for the people leads to a person's perfection. A deed leads to perfection when, in addition to being beneficial, the motive and intention of the performer of

.that deed are sound, constructive and totally for the sake of Allah

From the viewpoint of Islam, the standard for a Godly deed that is effective in the spiritual ascendance and perfection of man is not simply being beneficial. The criterion for such a deed is that it ought to be done for the pleasure of Allah, and divine .motivation has to compel one to do the deed

Even so, one of the criteria for the goodness and soundness of a deed is its being beneficial for others and every person's deeds are more valuable when they serve .the society

What is meant by the assertion that a deed ought to be done in the way of Allah is that a deed has to be set on a path and direction whose destination is Allah and as long as the goal is not Allah, the means or process is also not Divine. If the aim is to draw the attention of people, the course also is for the sake of attracting the attention of people. A deed is done for Allah and in His way when the performer pays attention to Allah at the time of performing it and this is feasible for one who knows Allah and .understands the value of nearness to Him

By accurately studying the verses of the Gracious Qur'an, we realize that often deeds which are good in our point of view have not only been reproached by the Qur'an, but .have been considered as lowly and mean

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One of those deeds is spending on other people, which we consider to be a good deed .and we praise a man when we see him providing philanthropic services to the poor

However, philanthropists that do not have a pure intention have been reproached in the Gracious Qur'an. They will be remorseful on the Day of Resurrection and will regret that they spent their wealth to draw the attention of others. It is possible that people praise someone in the world and stick his picture on doors and walls or even build a statue in his memory in order for all the people to remember him as a :philanthropist, but the Holy Qur'an states in his regard

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لاَ تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُم بِالْمَنِّ وَالأذَى كَالَّذِى يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلاَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا لاَ يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللّهُ لاَ يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

O you who have faith! Do not render your charities void by reproaches and affronts," like those who spend their wealth to be seen by people and have no faith in Allah and the Last Day. Their parable is that of a rock covered with soil: a downpour strikes it,

leaving it bare. They have no power over anything of what they have earned, and Allah does not guide the faithless lot."(۱)

If spending on other human beings is done for ostentation and sanctimony and not on the basis of faith in Allah and the Last

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۱- Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۶۴.

Day, it has no value whatsoever and the example of such a sanctimonious person is like that of a person who instead of planting his seeds on fertile land, sows it on a hard rock and covers it with a handful of soil and waits for it to grow, become green and reap produce from it!

He is heedless of the fact that once a violent wind or heavy rain falls, his seeds will be wiped off the rock and taken away. As such, these philanthropists do not reap anything from the money and efforts they have spent for the reason that it was not spent on the basis of faith and in the way of Allah and the hereafter.

This group spends and serves the society to show off and compete with others in order to be remembered and praised in the minds of other human beings. If they have a position or appointment such as being a people's lawyer or representative, they serve in order to be elected for another term and if they work in an office, they exert themselves to be promoted to a higher position. In this case, the services of such people do not have the least value and they are not effective in their prosperity in the hereafter.

However, the criterion and standard of good and sound deeds which are a cause of man's prosperity in the hereafter is that the deed must be related to faith and spring from faith and it is

for this reason that in the Holy Qur'an, Allah, the Exalted, has conjoined faith and good

:deeds

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِين آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجرِی مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ...

And give good news to those who have faith and do righteous deeds that for them“ (shall be gardens with streams running in them...”(١

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَئِکَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّهِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

And those who have faith and do righteous deeds, they shall be the inhabitants of“ (paradise; they shall remain in it [forever].”(٢

:And elsewhere, it states

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَکَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَی وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهُ حَيَاهً طَيِّبَهً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا کَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, and is a believer, We shall“ revive him with a good life and pay them their reward by the best of what they used to (do.”(٣

Therefore, the relationship between faith and deeds has to be safeguarded because .only deeds that spring from faith and belief in Allah can be directed towards Allah

الَّذِی يُؤْتِی مَالَهُ يَتَزَکَّی * وَمَا لأَحَدٍ عِنْدَهُ مِنْ نِعْمَهٍ تُجْزَی * إِلاَّ ابْتِغَاء وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الأَعْلَی

He who gives wealth to purify himself and does not expect any reward from anyone,“ (but seeks the pleasure of His Lord, the Most Exalted.”(۴

Some people spend and give charity, but do not have the intention of sanctimony and attracting the attention of other human beings or seeking their gratitude. Even if the people speak ill of this person, he does not quit his work and spends as Allah has :commanded him

وَيُطْعِمُونَ

.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۵ -۱

.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۸۲ -۲

.Surat al-Nahl ۱۶:۹۷ -۳

.Surat al-Layl ۹۲:۱۸-۲۰ -۴

الطَّعَامَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا * إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لاَ نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاء وَلاَ شُكُورًا

They give food, for the love of Him, to the needy, the orphan and the prisoner" [saying,] 'We feed you only for the sake of Allah. We do not want any reward from you (nor any thanks'."(۱)

Therefore, our deeds are sound if they spring from faith and if they are done for Allah, but if they are done without the intention of gaining nearness to Him and they are accompanied by non-divine intentions, they are like a body without a soul whose shape is nicely made but it lacks a soul to give it movement and growth. In addition to .not growing, deeds that have no soul breed corruption

Consequently, it is not correct to believe that every deed that is beneficial to people and is considered as service to the society ought to be perceived as good and .commendable without considering its motivation and intention

That which has been stated is not only characteristic perception of the general population. Some of the educated also consider the criterion of the value and merit of deeds to be outward justice and the deed having been done for the sake of benefiting and serving people although the standard of merit and value of deeds and their .effects on human prosperity is something quite different

A shallow and superficial person conceives the bulk and social effects of a deed as the criterion of judgment but this standard is

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.Surat al-Insan ۷۶:۸-۹ -۱

not divine and Allah does not look at the bulk of deeds. He does not look at how much

money has been spent or how much movement and energy has been used. Allah sees how much a deed was performed for Him and it in turn brings about prosperity to that .same measure that it is intended for Him

However, in acts of worship contingent on the intention to gain proximity to Allah, deeds become corrupt even if there is an iota of non-divine intention in them and if someone else is set as a partner with Allah. Obligatory and recommended devotional deeds have to be completely purified for Allah and if an individual is sanctimonious in these deeds and observes such rites of worship to please people, not only are his deeds corrupt but prohibited and a cause of reproach. Even that part of the deed that :is done for Allah will not be accepted. As Allah states

I am the best of partners; I do not accept the deeds of a person who sets up another" (one to be my partner in his deeds."(١

Consequently, if a person sets up a partner to Allah in deeds of servitude, Allah gives up his share to that partner and because the deed was not purely for Him the deed goes to waste. It is possible, therefore, for a person to become wretched and ill-fated after years of effort and endeavor. He spends a lifetime acquiring knowledge with the imagination that he is

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۰, p. ۲۴۳ -۱

doing it for Allah but when he carefully examines his intentions, he perceives that he was studying for position or social status—striving for fame and popularity among .people

If such an individual says that he served the people, saved a lot of poor people from destitution, provided medical services to many needy people, built schools and hospitals, Allah will tell him that none of his deeds will grant him benefit because the reward and profit of his deeds is the same praise which the people heaped upon him. The reward of such a person is the hanging of his picture on walls and printing it in

magazines and newspapers and the praise which he was paid as a philanthropist and doer of good.

Ultimately, the criterion of value and merit for deeds is connected with the heart—we have to observe the source of the motivation of the deed. Was it on account of love of this world or love of Allah? If it was done for Allah and with purity of intention, it will bring about spiritual ascendance and human perfection, but in other than this case it is likely to cause decadence and downfall and hindrance of spiritual ascendancy and human perfection.

If that deed is an act of worship, it becomes nullified by hypocrisy and if it is a type of cajolery and not for the intention of gaining proximity to Allah, it loses its value and reward. Hence, the value of every deed is not based on its benefit

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for people or the society, whether an Islamic or non-Islamic society.

What is more, the merit of deeds is not only that they ought to be beneficial for the religion and the believers, because all too often man does a deed which is beneficial for the religion but harmful for himself because it was done without purity of intention. In the entire history of Islam, a lot of people did deeds which were good for the religion and sometimes brought about the spread and expansion of religion but these deeds were not beneficial for them because they were not done with pure intentions.

Their intention was perhaps to acquire more land or become more popular and beloved among the people, neither of which brings about spiritual ascendancy or human perfection. It has been narrated in a hadith that:

"Allah sometimes confirms his religion through corrupt people."(۱)

It is possible for corrupt and libertine rulers, for the sake of personal motives and seeking fame as well as expansion of the realm of their rule, to have embarked upon conquests in the course of history which resulted in the spread of religion; however, even if their actions were beneficial for the religion and Islam, they would still not

bring any reward to them in the hereafter. For this reason, we have to observe the role of motives and inner intentions and know that value and superiority of deeds derive from divine intentions and that it is possible for a deed to be apparently small

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۵, p. ۱۹ -۱

but be divine and valuable on account of being done with worthwhile and pure .intentions

The Importance of Integrity in Cultural and Religious Programs

In accordance with this issue, the propagators and exponents of religion have to be attentive to the fact that in the propagation as well as execution of religious programs and the establishment of religious centers and encouragement of others in these issues, their motives and intentions have to be pure. It is possible for them to guide other human beings to the correct way by means of their propagation and advice and to attract people to religious and cultural issues as well as to provide suitable grounds for the promotion of cultural activities and bring about quantitative and qualitative growth in cultural affairs of the society as a result of their efforts at building mosques and establishing religious centers, but they must not imagine that their efforts are .always beneficial and that they certainly reap heavenly reward from them

Such activities are only beneficial and result in spiritual ascendance and human perfection when the aim is Allah. Movement and effort have to be only for the sake of promoting religion and one ought not to have personal intentions in these endeavors. .It is in this case that great prosperity will be granted

However, if a person is impelled to move and make effort by personal and worldly motives, he must not expect any reward from Allah. This point must not be forgotten or a false image developed that a deed is beneficial because it has very

good results, causing a person to become proud. On the contrary, intentions must be scrutinized so that one not only does not become proud but becomes modest. :Explaining this point, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Allah the Glorified and Honored states, "I do not accept the speech of a" wise person, but that which is in his heart; his intention and aim. If he devotes his will and intention to that which I like and please, I accept his silence as My invocation and '".praise, even if he has not uttered a word

People who have learned wisdom and explain it to others are praised and lauded by human beings and people look upon them with respect. Of course, it is true that people ought to have favorable opinions in regard to others, but the preacher has to observe to what extent he is sure about his own deeds. Are his words accepted by Allah and do they result in his gaining proximity to Him or not? Allah Himself has given the response to this question: He does not have anything to do with wise sayings but .with the motive and intention which is concealed behind words

Allah looks at the inclinations and tendencies of human beings. He looks at whether man's heart is preoccupied by people and winning their praise and pleasure or whether a person only thinks about performing his duty and doing what is expected of him by Allah. People ought not to be concerned with

whether others are pleased or not. They must not be remiss in discharging obligations .even if the people dislike what they say

Therefore, if one's inclination and tendency is to please Allah, even his silence receives the reward of invocation and praise because his heart is directed at Allah and he wants to do only that which pleases Him. He keeps silence because he conceives the pleasure of Allah is in silence and for this reason, his silence is considered to be worship and all too often silence has more reward than other people's acts of worship .and has greater effects in man's spiritual perfection

A person whose words and deeds are for people and whose heart is directed at them does not attain virtue and rewards whatsoever and his reward is that same praise and laudation which the people heap on him because he has not done anything for .which Allah should grant him reward

With regard to what has been said and knowledge of the pivotal effects of inner motives and inclinations in the essence of deeds, if we observe that a person says what he distinguishes as his duty, even if the people are averse to it, we ought to know that he has divine motivation and for this reason his deeds and words have .merit

However, if he pays heed to people when talking and avoids saying what is pleasing to Allah because he does not perceive social conditions as favorable and he fears that the people will

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be displeased with what he says, his motivation is not divine and hence his acts are .devoid of value and merit because his attention is on the people

The Importance of Intention and Inner Inclinations

O Abu Dharr! Allah, the Exalted and Honored, does not look at your outer appearance“ ”.and possessions [and what you say], but he looks at your hearts and deeds

Allah does not look at the appearances of people nor does He look at what they say and the claims they make. He does not look at the calluses which develop on people’s foreheads due to prostration nor the clothes which they wear, but he looks at the extent to which their hearts and deeds confirm their claims. He looks at whether that which is in their hearts is better than their outward appearances or, God forbid, their hearts are polluted and contaminated. If their inside is polluted, they are considered .to be hypocrites and do not receive any reward from Allah

This section of the hadith is both shocking and admonishing and serves as a warning that must be taken seriously to cause us to change our opinions about ourselves.

[Again, we have to hold favorable opinions in regard to others.] If a person scrutinizes his intentions, he sees that a great deal of his intentions are not divine and pure, or at least that a portion of his intentions are not divine and he has set another as a partner with Allah and Allah has Himself stated that if another is set as His

partner, He relinquishes His share to that partner.

We ought to observe the intentions and motivations of the words which we utter, the work that we do, the prayers that we perform as well as the advice that we give to other human beings. Do we attend congregational prayers because Allah loves it or do we have other motivations? If our acts of servitude are not pure and non-divine motivations interfere in them, our intentions will not be pure in the rest of our deeds either. In addition to this, if our deeds and devotional responsibilities are not pure, they will basically be null and void.

Such cankers as hypocrisy, pretense and including motivations of the carnal soul in acts of worship are often found to a greater extent in people that have the duty to guide and lead others than in the general population: a laborer and butcher who performs shortened prayers after his daily duties at the end of the day because of being tired does not usually do so out of hypocrisy.

However, for a person that is charged with leading the prayers as an imam and counsels, teaches religious sciences and guides people, the issue of sanctimony and being contaminated by non-divine motivations is a serious danger; in the case that such people become contaminated by hypocrisy, they become doomed both in this world and the hereafter.

Thereafter, in order to express that the apparent conduct, deeds and claims do not denote that a person has piety and that

piety is an attribute that is found in the hearts of human beings and that the criterion

of the superiority of deeds is pure intentions and motivations, the Noble Prophet (S) :points at his chest and states

".O Abu Dharr! Piety is in here. Piety is in here"

Not every person who outwardly does good deeds, performs prayers a lot, recites invocations and provides services to people is pious. His intention and motivation must be assessed, if they are for Allah, that person is pious; otherwise, he only .simulates piety

Previously we mentioned that sometimes doing good deeds and performing religious and obligatory duties and refraining from forbidden actions is termed as piety and at other times the permanent habit of the soul which is the fountainhead of worthy and good deeds is called piety. Taking this perception into consideration, our acts of worship and good deeds are considered instances of piety when their source and fountainhead is love of Allah and divine intentions. For this reason, we need to have more accurate attention to the foundations of deeds because no deed is done without .an intention

Man's volitional deeds spring from motivations and intentions. It is those motivations that give man the desire to perform deeds and, in reality, those deeds and words are the crystallization of our will and intention. Of course, it is possible for a person to have the intention to perform some deed and to prepare himself to discharge it, but the requisites for doing the deed hinder

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him from doing it. In that case, the spiritual effects of the deed remain in his heart even though in the external world no effect of the deed comes into appearance. That .spiritual effect is a result of those inner intentions and inclinations

The Noble Prophet (S) states that man ought to pay attention to where the motivation of his deeds spring from and where his inner inclination is directed. Is it directed ?towards Allah and His will or at people and worldly reward

If a deed is done with non-divine intentions, even if it is a good and recommendable deed, it will be devoid of spiritual and divine reward and it will not grant man prosperity even if it results in the promotion and expansion of the religion because it is not done with divine intentions which bring about proximity to Allah. Allah looks at the essence of actions and inner intentions for doing deeds. If deeds are divine, He accepts them; otherwise, He rejects those deeds and He does not have anything to :do with the exterior of deeds

لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهَ لُحُومُهَا وَلاَ دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَى مِنكُمْ...

It is not their flesh or their blood that reaches Allah. Rather, it is your piety that" (reaches Him..."(١

The Way to Purify Motives and Intentions

Misdeeds have no connection with Allah, but are connected with human beings and the natural world and that which connects a deed to Allah is a person's intention. With regard to the Noble Prophet's (S) sayings, it is befitting to observe what motivation

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.Surat al-Hajj ۲۲:۳۷ -۱

impels us to do whatever deed we do and in the case that intentions are not pure, we have to embark upon purifying those intentions; of course, purifying intentions is a .difficult task and calls for preparing the grounds and prerequisites

Along this path, we have to seek the help of Allah first of all and diligently strive to edify our souls and cleanse them of impurities and non-divine inclinations in order for .this important issue to be attained by means of ascetic discipline and self-building

When a person discerns that his intention is not pure and there are non-divine impurities in it, it is likely that he may give up altogether instead of cleansing his intentions. This too is the devil's trap which hinders man from carrying out his duties. For instance, if he intends to go on a mission of religious propagation, he may

perceive that his intentions are not pure and become dissuaded from going as a result. He tells himself that he will not go on the mission of propagation because his .intentions are not pure

This is exactly what the devil wants because man's duty is to go and propagate the religion and guide people to the truth and if we put aside this obligation as a consequence of the devil's insinuations, a suitable opportunity is provided for the devil to misguide people even more. For this reason, when we realize that our intentions are not pure, we must not just give up on our duties

p: ۴۱۶

and responsibilities; on the contrary, we should even more diligently strive to purify .our intentions

p: ۴۱۷

About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ
?Are those who know equal to those who do not know
al-Zumar: ۹

:Introduction
Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ۲۰۰۷, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto
Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the

field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the cyberspace.

Our Goals are:

-propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t)

-encouraging the populace particularly the youth in investigating the religious issues

-replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers

-providing services for seminary and university researchers

-spreading culture study in the publich

-paving the way for the publications and authors to digitize their works

Policies:

-acting according to the legal licenses

-relationship with similar centers

-avoiding parallel working

-merely presenting scientific contents

-mentioning the sources

It's obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author.

Other activities of the institute:

-Publication of books, booklets and other editions

-Holding book reading competitions

-Producing virtual, three dimensional exhibitions, panoramas of religious and tourism places

-Producing animations, computer games and etc.

-Launching the website with this address: www.ghaemiyeh.com

Fabricatingdramatic and speech works-

Launching the system of answering religious, ethical and doctrinal questions-

Designing systems of accounting, media and mobile, automatic and handy systems,- web kiosks

Holding virtual educational courses for the public-

Holding virtual teacher-training courses-

Producing thousands of research software in three languages (Persian, Arabic and- English) which can be performed in computers, tablets and cellphones and available and downloadable with eight international formats: JAVA, ANDROID, EPUB, CHM, PDF, HTML, CHM, GHB on the website

Also producing four markets named "Ghaemiyeh Book Market" with Android, IOS,- WINDOWS PHONE and WINDOWS editions

:Appreciation

We would appreciate the centers, institutes, publications, authors and all honorable .friends who contributed their help and data to us to reach the holy goal we follow

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Users' affairs: ۰۹۱۳۲۰۰۰۱۰۹

Introduction of the Center – Ghaemiyeh Digital Library